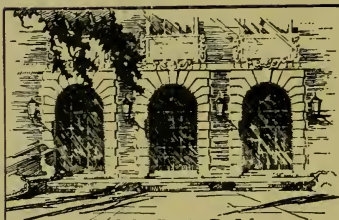




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THE ABBESS.

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J. Darling, Printer, Leadenhall Street, London.

# THE ABBESS.

A ROMANCE.

By W. H. IRELAND,

AUTHOR OF

BRUNO, OR THE SEPULCHRAL SUMMONS; GONDEZ THE MONK;  
RIMUALDO, OR THE CASTLE OF BADAJOS;  
THE CATHOLIC, &c. &c.

---

Let modest matrons at thy mention start,  
And blushing virgins, when they read our annals,  
Skip o'er the guilty page. SHAKSPEARE.

---

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.

1834.



823  
In 25a  
v. 1

## PROLOGUE.

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*McFarquhar 33 Sept 53*  
**HIGH** on a rock that rears its rugged steep,  
**Frowning** defiance on the threat'ning deep,  
**An hostile band of critics I descry,**  
**Who view the stripling author's vessel fly ;**  
**Sable their garb, with faces long and dire,**  
**While from their eyes flash beams of angry fire.**  
**" And dares this youth his fragile bark assay ?**  
**And can he hope for an auspicious day ?"**  
**Vain insolence and pride, man's fatal snare !**  
**He sinks, indeed, who thus can boldly dare.**  
**One, more terrific than the rest, appears,**  
**At whose dread sight the band seems aw'd with fears.**  
**" Silence !"—the word : they tremble at his nod,**  
**As well they may—he is a demi-god !—**  
**A lord of lords !—of critics ranking king,**  
**And trembling myriads feel his potent sting.**

*Gen. 1124. Ray 4 May 52 Edwards 3d ed. v.*  
**VOL. I.**

**B**

**A gloomy**

A gloomy silence reigns, more dreadful far  
 Than bellowing tempests, or the din of war.  
 "Hear me," the sallow envious monarch cries :  
 "He feels no pang who in a moment dies.  
 Ev'n Death himself, in all his terrors drest,  
 Becomes most welcome to that languid breast,  
 Where pale disease hath held her aching throne,  
 And anguish follow'd each succeeding groan.  
 'Twere charity to crush this youth in's prime :  
 No ; he shall live to be the gaze o'th' time,  
 Like monster-race of strange and uncouth form,  
 To be the butt and finger-mark of scorn.  
 Thus shall his days in endless torture glide,  
 Till from Time's glass its latest sand shall slide."  
 The hero stops, and with conceited smile  
 Receives the plaudits of his vot'ries vile.  
 Meantime, the youth amid the ocean steers,  
 And views th' impending storm o'ercome with fears :  
 The billows rise, the critic's ire prevails,  
 The keen blast rends the unresisting sails,  
 Shivers the mast, and leaves the deck forlorn,  
 The sport of Neptune, and the critic's scorn.  
 To Heav'n the youth his suppliant eye uprears,  
 From which in torrents flow his contrite tears ;

Vainly

Vainly his voice and trembling hands implore—  
 The plaint is lost in the deep thunder's roar.  
 The yawning surge rears high its curl-tipp'd waves,  
 And 'midst dun clouds its frothy bosom laves :—  
 A dreadful crash now echoes to the skies ;  
 Against a rock the wave-toss'd vessel hies :  
 She splits, and to the bottom sinks the chest ;  
 The spurious papers are consign'd to rest.  
 To save a wretched life the youth yet strives,  
 And in the bosom of the ocean dives ;  
 Against his breast the furious surges beat ;  
 In vain he tries the wished-for shores retreat ;  
 His languid limbs their wonted aid deny,  
 All hope is fled, and he's prepar'd to die :  
 But GOD, in whom all virtues are combin'd,  
 Who sees the workings of the human mind,  
 Whose word is justice, and whose will is law,  
 Whose wide creation is without one flaw,  
 That mighty GOD, who, from his mercy-seat,  
 Can awe the monarch, and his pow'r defeat,  
 Can shed contentment o'er the peasant's cot,  
 And render poverty a happy lot,  
 HE saw, HE stretch'd his arm the youth to save,  
 Oppress'd, and sinking to a liquid grave.

The flowing tide now casts him on the shore ;  
 The waves retreat, the storm is heard no more ;  
 O'erjoy'd he greets the land, and prostrate falls,  
 Kisses the earth, and on his Maker calls.  
 Sleep, balmy sleep, his senses now entrance ;  
 In fancy's ken, the pleasing visions dance ;  
 He dreams not of Elysium, or that God,  
 Who on Bœtia's mountain sways his rod ;  
 Nor of the Heliconian Damsels Nine ;  
 Nor of that stream inspiring thoughts divine ;  
 Nor of that blood-born steed, that horse which sprung  
 From fam'd Medusa's gore ; he, who hath flung  
 Those critics, that to mount him dar'd aspire,  
 Without one ray of his poetic fire.  
 His dreams are not disturb'd by fleeting souls,  
 By Suckling playing at a game of bowls ;  
 Nor are his slumbers hush'd by heav'nly gales,  
 By Chaucer's Surry's song, or little Hales ;  
 Nor Spenser, Dryden, nor big-bellied Ben,  
 Nor Shakspear, greatest, most divine of men,  
 Whose heav'n-born genius, like the blazing sun,  
 Illumin'd ev'ry theme, left nought undone ;  
 He, who before Apollo makes his moans,  
 Who fills Parnassus with his tears and groans,  
Beseeching



Beseeching Jove to hurl his rattling thunders,  
 And scourge th' author of Hibernian blunders ;  
 For, sure, that mortal, so bereft of wit,  
 That dares to criticise our Shakspear's writ,  
 Should pangs of Ixion bear, or Tantalus,  
 Or roll the pond'rous stone of Sisyphus.  
 Such fancies did not soothe the author's brain :  
 He wander'd not amidst the Muses' train,  
 But views a British female bland and fair,  
 Who, smiling, offers him her fost'ring care :  
 " Hear me, oh youth," she cries ; " my counsels keep ;  
 Or better hadst thou perish'd in the deep.  
 No longer tread that dang'rous path for fame ;  
 Never again assume another's name :  
 As your works merit, let them stand or fall,  
 Be either pitied or admir'd by all,  
 Critics excepted, they whose envious spleen  
 Would crush the plant, and let it die unseen :  
 Their praise or friendship you can never gain :  
 They are the offspring of th' invet'rate Cain ;  
 Nor would they spare a brother in their ire,  
 For persecution is their lov'd desire.  
 Change, then, your note, quit the dramatic throng,  
 And to ROMANCE attune your early song.

The British fair will shield you from alarm :  
They will attempt the critic to disarm ;  
But, should they fail, Britons have souls of dew,  
Souls that will melt, forgive, and pity you."

# THE ABBESS.

---

## CHAP. I.

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright !  
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of Night,  
Like a rich jewel in an Æthiop's ear ;  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear !  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,  
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.  
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,  
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.  
Did my heart love till now ? forswear it, sight !  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

*Romeo and Juliet.*

IT was the convent of Santa Maria del Nova at Florence, that contained the lovely Maddalena Rosa ; and it was to the church of that convent that the

conte Marcello Porta repaired, on the morning of the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin, in order to witness the pomp and grandeur with which it was to be solemnized. There being but few persons yet present, he took his station opposite the grate, that he might at the same time have a more perfect view of the nuns, and be better enabled to hear the melody of their voices, than he would have done in any other part of the edifice.

The grand altar was splendidly illuminated; and the numerous relics enshrined in gold and silver, ornamented with precious stones, which displayed the wealth of the convent, were arranged to create wonder and inspire religious awe in the beholders.

The most conspicuous figure was that of the Virgin, in massive silver, supporting on her left arm the Infant Redeemer, and,

and, in her right hand, holding a small sphere of gold, said to contain three drops of her precious milk. Her head was encircled with a rich diadem of immense value, and her neck decorated with a string of diamonds, from which hung pendent a cross of gold, rendered invaluable as containing a piece of the true Cross.

The surrounding chapels, dedicated to various saints, presented a magnificent appearance, blazing with innumerable tapers, whose rays beautifully gleamed on wreaths of fancy flowers, formed by the fair hands of the sisterhood.

The grand works of Cimabue, one of the first Italian painters, though deprived by time of the brilliancy of their colouring, still showed the excellency and superior genius of that great artist.

Before the grate was drawn a curtain

of crimson velvet, parted in the middle, on one side of which was curiously embroidered in gold, the Virgin's flight from Herod's cruelty; the other displaying her glorious Assumption. The grate was of bright iron, curiously wrought in open work, and beautifully ornamented with figures of the twelve Apostles, of polished brass.

While occupied in the contemplation of these objects, the conte Marcello had not observed the concourse of people who had entered the church, and was astonished, on turning, to behold it crowded in every part. Shortly after, the padre Ignazio, who was that day the officiating ecclesiastic, approached the altar, followed by several monks. A youth in scarlet robes bore a silver cross, being surrounded by many others of his own age and stature, in white vestments, who were perfuming the air with incense.

The



The curtain was immediately drawn from before the grate, when the conte beheld the lady abbess and the numerous sisterhood of the convent. A strain of heavenly harmony floated on the air; not a sigh was heard within the church; every ear was charmed; it seemed as if religion's voice sang in plaintive notes the praises of the Almighty.

The conte yielded to the general charm, and, with eyes bent on the ground, remained buried in a pleasing melancholy, till roused by the bass voices of the monks, when, recollecting himself, he turned towards the grate, anxious to examine the persons of those whose sweet notes had so strongly operated on his senses.

In the madre Vittoria Bracciano, who was seated on a throne elevated above the rest of the sisterhood, he beheld a woman of beautiful and commanding  
B 6 features.

features. She appeared about thirty, was descended from one of the noblest families in Italy, and, being the youngest of several daughters, her father's interest procured her the station of lady abbess of this convent. She wore indeed a religious habit, but was ill calculated to adorn it, every worldly feeling predominating in her heart. Benignity, meekness, patience, and charity, such heavenly attributes, were not the inmates of her breast; no—pride, cruelty, malice, and revenge, such were the passions that reigned triumphant o'er her mind; while her desires were licentious, and with difficulty bridled, even by the situation she held.

Such was the character of the madre Bracciano, before whom were seated the nuns, one side being occupied by the novices, while on the other were stationed the boarders of the convent, among whom was Maddalena Rosa,  
daughter



daughter of the duca Bertocci. It was her lovely form that attracted the conte's gaze; it was her beauty that excited in his bosom a sensation hitherto unknown, pain and pleasure alternately predominating o'er his mind—dread, at beholding her the inhabitant of a convent, and joy, that she was no other than one of its boarders.

She appeared about eighteen; her stature rather tall, and perfectly elegant; her face was of the Grecian outline, and transparently fair, which was rendered more beautiful by the addition of two full dark eyes, whose dazzling lustre, like a tear on Diana's cheek, beamed nought but chastity: her auburn ringlets gently wantoned round her lily neck, yet dared not touch it, fearful of wounding its snowy modesty. But, if nature might be deemed lavish in the exterior formation of Maddalena Rosa, what were those gifts, when put in competition with

with the superior endowments of her mind, which was replete with every virtue !

The conte's eyes remained rivetted on her face, when, chancing to catch his glance, she blushed, and instantly bent hers to the ground. He became desirous of knowing her name and family, and, for that purpose, turned to inquire of one of the monks who stood near him ; but his eagerness was immediately checked, on beholding at his side a tall pallid figure, clad in the monastic habit, whose eyes were directed towards him with particular earnestness.

There was something in his manner which struck the conte with horror : he again fixed his gaze on Maddalena Rosa, whose regard a second time met his, when confused, she hastily averted her glance.

At

At the conclusion of the mass, the nuns chanted a hymn to the Blessed Virgin, and then, with the lady abbess at their head, slowly withdrew into the convent. On the beautiful Maddalena passing the grate, the conte eagerly traced her steps until she disappeared, when he felt unhappy ; the world and all its pleasures vanished ; it seemed as if he was bereaved of every earthly joy, and for some moments he indulged this melancholy train of ideas, when suddenly the recollection of the monk obtruded on his thoughts. Unwillingly, he turned his head ; again the figure struck his sight, the same penetrating eye being rivetted on his countenance, as if anxious to pierce the inmost recesses of his soul. The friar, rising with slow and measured steps, quitted the church, and passed into the convent by a door that communicated with the cloisters.

“ ’Tis strange ! ” said the conte, rising.

“ His

“His manner, the sternness of his aspect, too—what could they portend? Had I before seen him, his extraordinary figure would never have been obliterated from my memory: yet I may resemble a friend he once esteemed, if such a feeling was ever the inmate of his bosom.”

The conte proceeded, musing, to the door of the church; and, gaining the strada, soon arrived at the palace of Marcello Porta.

’Twas then the form of Maddalena came fresh to his mind. With what enthusiastic pleasure did he retrace those lovely features, and picture to his imagination, in glowing colours, the virtues which must inhabit such a frame!—like the sweet bird, whose delicate form and exquisitely-pencilled plumage, delights the eye, but whose plaintive melody fills the soul with rapture.

The

The cooler voice of reason sometimes intervened, to check this youthful enthusiasm; but the conte instantly stifled its dictates, as inimical to his happiness. Thus hurried on, he felt a flame within his breast, but did not dare confess its influence. He determined, therefore, on visiting the church at evening vespers, in the hope of again beholding the lovely Maddalena, and the intervening time was spent in anxious expectation.

The wished-for moment at length arrived, when he hastily repaired to the convent of Santa Maria, where he procured nearly the same situation he had occupied in the morning. In a short time the curtain was again undrawn—eagerly his eyes sought the beloved object, who appeared more beautiful and interesting than before.

Again the conte gazed on her with increased transport; the roseate tinge of  
youth

youth illumed his manly countenance: no longer he denied the tender impulse. Love fired his breast, and he gloried in becoming one of his votaries. Absorbed in pleasing thoughts, he pictured to his imagination scenes of future happiness; his enthusiastic mind strewed life's path with violets. Foolish youth! thou didst not observe the glided snake, that, unperceived, sprang to sting thy budding felicity.

It was long ere the conte withdrew his regard from the lovely Maddalena; his eye, at length, caught that of the domina: her scrutinizing glance instantly struck him; he fancied that she had read the workings of his soul; he felt uneasy, and blamed himself for having so long rivetted his attention on the beautiful boarder.

He determined to be cautious, and, by his guarded conduct, no more risk  
the



the betraying of his passion. He regarded the numerous assemblage of persons in the church; but it was the gaze of vacancy. His mind was wholly occupied in the contemplation of a different object; involuntarily his eyes wandered to the grate—but again met those of the lady abbess, when hastily turning, he beheld at his side the stern-featured monk, who had before excited such strange sensations in his bosom: singular emotions were again pervading the conte's mind; but he suddenly checked them; having never consciously injured, he had no cause to fear any man. As he bent his eyes upon the father, the faint rays of the declining sun, falling on the opposite window, richly adorned with painted glass, reflected on his sallow visage a gleam of purple light, that rendered his appearance even more repugnant than before.

A confused train of ideas occupied  
the

the conte's mind, till the conclusion of vespers, when he again beheld the sisterhood depart. He rose to quit the church, but found himself detained, and turning hastily, to his astonishment, found it was the monk that grasped his arm.—“What would you with me, holy father?” cried the conte.

“That which I have to impart must be in private,” replied the monk, in a hollow tone: “say, therefore, will you meet me?”

“When, good father?”

“This night, at twelve,” continued the monk.

“At twelve!” exclaimed the conte; “and where?”

“Without the little gate, that opens to the cloisters.”

The conte paused.

“Wherefore hesitate you, signor?”

The monk's request had so much astonished



tonished the conte, that he could not immediately reply. The time and place contributed to heighten his wonder, and he was on the point of giving an absolute refusal, when an irresistible impulse urged his acquiescence with the father's demand.—“Of what nature, father, is the subject that requires such secresy?”

“Meet me, signor, and you shall know,” replied the monk, looking sternly at the conte, as if displeased at his interrogatory; “but if your timidity,” continued the monk, assuming a smile of contempt, “predominates over your curiosity, you must remain in ignorance.”

The conte, stung to the soul at this supposition, hastily answered—“Beware how you——” But checking himself, replied, after a moment's pause—“I shall meet you, father.”

The monk bowing, slowly retired; and the conte returned to his palace,  
ruminating

ruminating on the strangeness of the adventure.

After some time spent in vainly perplexing his imagination with suppositions, which, when maturely considered, bore not the smallest appearance of probability, he determined to wait the event with patience; and the remainder of the evening was spent in study.

As the clock struck eleven, the conte rose, and was on the point of quitting his palace unarmed, when he stopped, and, after a moment's consideration, deemed such a step highly imprudent; returning, therefore, to his chamber, he concealed a poniard beneath his vest, and taking his sword, left the palace, muffled up in his cloak.

It was one of those nights, when the moon is visible at intervals only, as the  
dark

dark clouds, driven by the howling wind, continually obscured its pallid light.

The conte arrived at the convent, and soon gained the door which the monk had mentioned; but no one was there. After waiting some minutes, he advanced, and applying his hand, found it was unlocked; pushing it open, he descended by three steps into the cloisters—at that moment the abbey-clock tolled *twelve*.

The conte, closing the door after him, proceeded up the cloisters; he thought he heard the sound of footsteps, and stopped; when turning, he perceived the monk, who advanced slowly towards him.—“So, signor, you have kept your appointment,” said he, with a slight inclination of the head.

“I had no cause, father, to shun a meeting with any man; though the time,  
place,

place, and singularity of this, might have deterred some persons."

The monk seemed not to notice this remark of the conte; but, proceeding slowly along the cloisters, motioned him to follow.

They advanced to the opposite side; and on arriving at a small door, which, from its situation, appeared to communicate with the monastery, the monk stopped, and, having opened it, entered a dark narrow passage, whither he was followed by the conte.—"Here, signor, I must leave you for a few minutes," said the father, as he withdrew the key from without, and carefully relocked the door.

The conte ironically answered—"Your caution, in thus having secured the door, has insured your finding me on your return."

The

The monk quitted him, without uttering a word, and as he retreated, the returning echo from his footsteps, borne upon the sullen wind, was all that broke the dreary stillness: they grew fainter, and soon died on the ear.

The dampness of the passage chilled the conte; he wrapped his cloak round him, and remained for some minutes rivetted to the spot. Something seemed to pass near him; he listened, but all was silent. — “Should this prove a snare!” thought the conte. He unsheathed his poniard; again a sound floated by him, and a faint gleam illumed the damp green walls: it was the monk who approached, bearing a lamp.

“Now, signor,” said he, “you may follow me.”

The conte obeyed the summons, and advanced up the passage, which was long and winding, ultimately terminat-

ing in a descending staircase. At the bottom was a narrow door, which the father having opened, they entered a spacious vault, and crossing to the opposite side, gained a second door, similar to that by which they had entered. This opened into other chambers equally spacious, when suddenly the monk stopped, and turning to the conte, thus addressed him:—"Yon passage, signor, leads to the vault which we must enter; there will your curiosity be gratified, and my errand fulfilled; but you must stand uncovered."

The conte, without making a reply, took off his bonnet. They then proceeded to the passage, at the entrance of which, within a niche, rested a stone figure of the Virgin. The monk placed the lamp on the ground, and, having bared his left shoulder, knelt before the image, seeming to offer up a prayer; then loosening the knotted rope that  
girded



girded his loins, struck himself several times with violence. The conte turned from the sight with disgust. The monk, rising, replaced his vestment, and proceeded up the passage; he then drew from his bosom a key, and, on the door's being thrown open, the conte's sight was overpowered by a strong glare of light issuing from within.

As soon as he could discern the various surrounding objects, his astonishment is not to be described, as he found himself in a small, but magnificent chapel, filled with innumerable riches. On the altar, which was decorated with the relics he had beheld in the morning, in the grand church, stood the same figure of the Virgin, when he instantly conjectured that this must be the private chapel, dedicated to our Lady, where all the relics and immense wealth of the convent were deposited. He had heard of the extraordinary beauty of this sanc-

c 2

tified

tified spot, and of the few persons, except those who were inmates of the convent, that had ever been permitted to enter it.

The monk advanced to the altar, and motioned the conte to approach.—“ Now, signor,” said he, “ are you the man your outward appearance speaks you?”

“ What mean you, father?” said the conte.

“ Can you be silent as the grave?” continued the monk. “ Would torture draw forth a secret entrusted to your charge?”

“ So it were not a tale burthensome to my soul, by my hopes of mercy, no rack should make me waver in a resolution once solemnly made.”

The monk then took from the altar a small missal, magnificently bound in crimson velvet.—“ I will trust you, signor,” said he, at the same time presenting



sending it to him. "Now, swear that you will for ever conceal that which I am going to impart."

"Hold, father! ere I will bind myself by such an oath, I must first interrogate."

The monk fixed his eyes on the conte.

"Is it murder, or any criminal act? Is it a tale that would injure the helpless or unfortunate? Is it——"

"Lose not your time, signor, by thus enumerating a catalogue of deeds, the bare thought of which never tainted our minds."

"Now, signor, let me, in my turn, interrogate.—Are you susceptible of love?"

"Of love!" exclaimed the conte, astonished.

"Ay; or do you bear the form of youth, without its attendant passions?"

The recollection of Maddalena flashed across his mind.—“ Perhaps,” thought the conte, “ the secret appertains to her; and if so, ’twere madness to refuse.”

“ Well,” continued the monk, “ are you determined ?”

“ I am !” cried the conte hastily, “ and solemnly swear——”

As he pronounced these words, a deep-toned bell struck his ear.

“ By heavens !” cried the monk, “ your scruples have delayed us too long—we must away.”

He hastily took the missal from the conte’s hand, and, opening the door by which they had entered the chapel, left it with precipitation, followed by the conte.

## CHAP. II.

Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphos'd me;  
 Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,  
 War with good counsel, set the world at nought;  
 Made wit with musing weak; heart-sick with thought.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

.....

—————But you, oh you,  
 So perfect and so peerless, are created  
 Of every creature's best. *Tempest,*

THE monk, having carefully locked the door, took up the lamp which he had left burning; and, having led the conte, without uttering a word, through the same vaults he had before done, they soon gained the cloisters.—“For the present, signor, I must leave you,” said the monk; “but will meet you again, to-morrow night, at this spot.”

“You may depend on my punctu-  
 c 4 ality,”

ality," returned the conte: "but at what hour, good father?"

"Why, eleven," answered the monk, after a short pause.

The conte quitted the cloisters; and the monk closed the door after him. He proceeded to his palace; and, throwing himself on a couch, sought that repose which the events of the night prevented his enjoying. The more he sought to develope this mystery, the more his mind became entangled. One dear enchanting thought he wished to cherish—"Oh!" he exclaimed, "should the lovely form that attracted my regard have divined my feelings; should she entertain but pity for me, that tender sentiment may perhaps nurture a warmer passion.

"The monk must be well acquainted with the convent of Santa Maria. By his habit, I know him to be one of the fathers belonging to the monastery of  
Santa

Santa Croce ; and some chosen brothers of that fraternity are confessors to the sisterhood of Santa Maria. If so, may he not have spoken to the beautiful boarder, during the hours that intervened between mass and vespers ? 'Tis not improbable ; or why should this monk a second time take his station near me in the church ? why fix his eyes on me with such earnestness, if not to penetrate the workings of my soul ? Ah, I have wronged this man : he may, perhaps, prove my greatest friend. Though his aspect is forbidding, yet may he possess a heart susceptible of tender feelings. How cautious we should be, ere we pronounce the face to be the index of the mind !”

Thus the conte continued to indulge his dearest wishes, adding fuel to the flame that was already kindled in his breast.

At a late hour he arose, and was soon after joined by his friend, the signor Viviani, son of an Italian nobleman. He had been the schoolfellow, and was now the bosom friend of the conte. They were of the same age, but differed widely in their opinions. Viviani was gay and dissipated, yet, in every sense of the word, a man of honour, while Marcello was lively, and fond of rational pleasures. He could not, like his friend, find amusement in scenes of riot and debauchery, which excited in his breast no other sensation save that of disgust. He was endowed by nature with an excellent understanding, which he had cultivated with assiduity. In infancy he lost an amiable mother, and, ere the attainment of his eighteenth year, became possessed of the title and estates of the conte Porta, by the decease of his father.

“ My dear friend,” exclaimed Viviani,  
as



as he, on entering, presented his hand to the conte, "why were you not with us yesternight? You know we all expected you at the palace of the marchesa. I assure you, I was never so well entertained; for, by all the saints in Christendom, I really think that I have lost my heart. But it was most cruel of you to be absent: the lovely donna Clara inquired for you. Now tell me, conte, how do you think she looked?"

"Nay, Viviani, I must be indebted to your sprightly wit for a simile."

"Why then, she looked just as melancholy and woe-begone as you do now. But, prithee tell me, what is the matter, don Dismallo? Has some fair nymph fired thy adamantine breast? has some distressed virgin sued to thee for protection? or art thou really indisposed? for, by heavens! in that case, I will lay aside all gaiety, and be thy watchful



and attentive nurse; thou knowest I am calculated for any employment."

"I thank you, Viviani," said the conte; "but you have at present no need to undergo that transformation. Something very extraordinary has occurred, I confess; and, were you not such a mad-brain, I might be inclined to trust you."

"Tell me," cried Viviani, interrupting the conte, "is there a woman in the case? are you inspired with the tender passion? If so, music must be your food; and, by the blessed Santa Cecilia, I can this evening feast your soul. But, prithee, keep me not in suspense by a tedious preamble: you know I hate prolixity, therefore tell me, have I or not divined the truth?"

"Can you be serious?" answered the conte.

"Why, yes, upon an occasion," returned Viviani.

"And

“ And will you stand my friend, if I should need your assistance ?”

“ Will I ! nay, conte, do you doubt me then ?” said Viviani, somewhat piqued.

“ I have wounded your feelings by the suggestion, and own my fault. Yes, Viviani, your thoughts are just : I have seen an object my heart approves—I am, indeed, in love !”

These words were uttered by the conte with great emotion.

“ You have trusted in my honour, and your confidence shall not be abused. No, conte, by my soul, I swear I will assist you, at the hazard of my life.”

The conte’s arms were open, and Viviani received the friendly embrace.

“ But say, who is this goddess that  
has

has charmed you? for more than mortal I am sure she must be."

"Nay, Viviani, that I know not: her name I am totally unacquainted with; and when I saw her, it was at a distance."

"What!" exclaimed Viviani, "has all your philosophy availed you so little, that you should bestow your heart without a knowledge of either the name or mind of your mistress?"

"Yes, yes, my friend, it is even so; but do not, I entreat, attempt to raise unpleasant thoughts within my breast. My philosophy, my reason, all have vanished before the charm. She must be gentle, innocent, chaste; she must be every thing that is amiable. The span-gled firmament proclaims not more omniscient greatness, than do her eyes radiate the stamp of virtue."

"But when saw you this angelic creature?" inquired Viviani.

"That, for the present, must remain  
a secret,

a secret, which, when I divulge, your breast shall be its depository."

"I am silent," said Viviani; "but tell me, conte, will you, this evening, accompany me to the palace of the marchese Galetti? He holds a concert there, and you will be delighted with some enchanting music. All the first families of the city will be present. Well, conte, what say you?"

"I should be happy to accompany you," said he, "but must to-night forego that pleasure; I have an engagement."

"'Tis unlucky!" returned Viviani: "I had flattered myself that you would have accompanied me thither. Is your engagement then of such consequence?"

"Well," said the conte, "if I yield to your entreaty, will you suffer me to depart before eleven?"

"Yes; I promise not to detain you after that hour."

"You may then depend on me," said the conte.

"Will

“ Will you call for me at my hotel ?”  
returned Viviani.

“ Yes; and you shall take part of my  
carriage.”

“ I accept your offer; and for the  
present must bid you adieu.”

The conte, as soon as Viviani had left him, fell into the same train of ideas that had occupied him on his restless couch. He took up a book—but Maddalena was before his eyes: he began a letter—but ere he had written ten words, threw down the pen, weary and discontented. It was the lovely boarder that wholly occupied his thoughts; and, while her beauties came fresh upon his mind, he composed the following stanzas:—

---

Oh! had I but Apollo's golden lyre,  
Or, glow'd my breast with half his frenzied fire;  
Or, had I seen sweet Venus' lovely face,  
On which resplendent shone each heav'nly grace,  
As rising from the glorious liquid plain,  
With nymphs and tritons singing in her train;  
Or,

Or, had I gaz'd on that soft golden hair,  
That wav'd around her neck divinely fair,  
On which the liquid diamonds trembling stood,  
Ready to mingle with their native flood ;

Then could I paint each graceful line  
That marks my mistress' face divine.

But since th' omniscient gods ordain'd it so,  
That man should taste no heav'nly bliss below,  
I will attempt, in wild untutor'd note,  
To sing those charms on which my soul doth doat ;  
And, as I warble forth my native strain,  
Judge *you* the pleasure, *I* must bear the pain.  
Let your warm fancy first her figure trace,  
Majestic and adorn'd with ev'ry grace,  
A look that fills the soul with tender fire,  
Yet checks the very wish it does inspire—

Yet, soft ; one sigh may ease my breast,  
And lull my troubled soul to rest.

A polish'd front, white as the mountain snow,  
And eyebrows, curv'd like chaste Diana's bow,  
Crowning two lustrous gems more brilliant far  
Than the clear radiance of the morning star ;  
A nose of Grecian form ; lips that outvie  
The nectar's sweetness and carnation's die ;  
Teeth like the ivory her mouth discloses,  
Or lilies planted 'midst a bed of roses ;

A well-



A well-turn'd neck as silky swansdown fair ;  
Like Neptune's foam her breast—No more I  
dare—

Love drops the curtain ; and I sigh—  
The rest is veil'd from mortal eye.

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In the evening, the conte prepared to visit his friend ; and on his arrival at the hotel, found signor Viviani ready to accompany him. They soon arrived at the Galetti palace, where most of the company were already assembled. Having paid their respects to the noble owners of the mansion, Viviani drew his friend towards the couch where donna Laura was seated. As they approached, her agitation was visible, and her cheeks wore the rose-tinctured hue. The conte and his friend seated themselves at her side.

“ By Heaven !” said Viviani, in a whisper, “ I am astonished that you should so long be insensible to her charms ;



charms; and since you have no serious intentions, I will endeavour myself to gain an interest in her heart."

The conte wished him success; and after a few minutes' conversation with donna Laura, removed to a seat at some distance from them.

The signora felt chagrined at the conte's thus deserting her; while Viviani endeavoured to rally her into good humour; and at length, in a great measure succeeded.

Donna Laura possessed much beauty, a good understanding, and a proportionate share of wit. Accustomed from infancy to have her wishes indulged, she could ill brook disappointment. The first time she saw the conte was at the house of a friend: the elegance of his person, and his agreeable and interesting manners, particularly attracted her notice.

tice. The frequent opportunities she afterwards had of conversing with him, strengthened her prepossession into an attachment, and the conte's assiduities, in the mean time, induced her to believe that she was not indifferent to him; indeed he had never seen a woman more calculated to inspire him with the tender emotions of love, until he beheld the enchanting boarder of Santa Maria.

The conte, during the evening, amused himself with making observations on the manners of the persons present. One, whose name he was unacquainted with, particularly attracted his notice. As he contemplated his features, he thought he had beheld a face that bore a strong resemblance to that before him. The more he gazed, the more he became satisfied that his conjecture was well founded. It was a countenance expressive of every noble and generous sentiment; while his figure, which was tall, possessed

possessed that graceful dignity, which never fails to charm the beholder.

The conte turning, beheld the signor Patelli close to him, of whom he inquired concerning the stranger that had so much engaged his attention.

“Is it possible, conte, that you can be a stranger to the duca Bertocci?”

“I have frequently heard his name mentioned,” replied the conte, “but do not recollect ever before being in his company.”

“If you have no objection, conte, I will make you better acquainted with his character.”

“I shall esteem myself much obliged, signor, by the communication.”

“The duca,” continued Patelli, “who is descended from an illustrious family, is a man of the nicest honour. To great natural strength of mind is added an extensive knowledge of the world, and  
he

he possesses a heart overflowing with benevolence. There is a mingled dignity and sweetness in his manners, that endears him to all who are honoured with his friendship.

“ In his youth, he became acquainted with the daughter of the marchese di Carnaro, who added to an exquisitely-beautiful form, an understanding the most refined and delicate. She soon gained the entire possession of his heart : the duca made an offer of his hand and fortune, which were accepted ; and he, for some years, enjoyed the purest state of felicity this life can afford. By his charming wife he had two children at a birth, a son and daughter. Would he had had no offspring ! But transitory are all earthly joys !—his happiness terminated in the death of this beloved wife, who expired a few hours after bringing her progeny into the world !

“ It was long ere the duca recovered from the dreadful shock which this loss occasioned ;

occasioned; and his mind is still tinctured with a degree of melancholy. At an early age, Maddalena Rosa was placed in the convent of Santa Maria in this city——”

At the mention of that well-known community, the conte's countenance exhibited the strongest emotions.

“Are you indisposed, conte?” said the signor Patelli, eyeing him with attention.

“No; I am perfectly well, signor: pray proceed.”

“Some months after this event,” continued he, “the duca quitted Florence, with an intention of visiting the person to whose care he had consigned his male infant: but imagine his feelings, conte, at receiving an express on the road, whereby he learned that his son had expired the preceding day, of a malignant fever,

fever, which proved fatal in twenty-four hours after its commencement!

“The unhappy duca instantly returned to Florence, and yielded himself a prey to despair, which, in a few days, confined him to his chamber. The physicians who attended him entertained little hopes of his recovery, and his life was, for a period, in imminent danger: it was the recollection of his remaining child that alone soothed his anguish, and he at length, though slowly, recovered.

“Maddalena Rosa’s form is lovely, and bears the most perfect resemblance to that of her angelic mother. Being sole heiress to the duca’s immense possessions, her hand has been sought by men of the highest rank.”

“And, doubtless, she has selected one from the number, whom she intends to honour!” exclaimed the conte, with agitation.

The description of the duca’s daughter



ter coincided so well with the lovely boarder that had inflamed his breast, and Maddelena Rosa being likewise an inmate of the convent of Santa Maria, the conte did not for a moment doubt that she must be the beautiful object, whose name and family he had been so desirous to ascertain.

“ Here, conte, you are mistaken,” said signor Patelli, gazing on him with surprise, “ as she has hitherto rejected every offer. The marchese Menzini, one of her admirers, on receiving her refusal, yielded himself a prey to melancholy, and has ever since secluded himself from society ; insomuch so, that even his dearest friends are not permitted to see him. But the violence of his passion is not to be wondered at ; she is indeed the most beautiful creature I ever beheld !

“ The sweetness of her disposition produces a charming effect on her ex-



pressive features. Indeed, conte, it has ever been my opinion, that an amiable temper renders even an ordinary countenance pleasing.

“ Though donna Maddalena possesses vivacity, it is mingled with a dignity and frankness, that evince the superiority of her mind over that of any other woman. She suppresses, in the most daring, all idea of bold familiarity. I could add much more in praise of this charming creature; but I fear, conte, lest your heart should become too much interested in my description.”

“ Nay, signor,” said the conte, smiling; “ why should you fear such an event? Can you then believe me so romantic, as to fall in love with a female whom I perhaps never saw?”

“ Even in that case, conte, you would not be singular; and, to convince you of the truth of my assertion, I will relate an anecdote of a friend of mine, who was invited to the house of an acquaintance,

acquaintance,

quaintance, where a large company were assembled. The conversation, during the evening, turned on the general character of females. A signor, who was present, used the most bitter invectives against the whole sex, declaring them to be deceitful—preferring pleasure to honourable pursuits; and concluded with pitying every man who was weak enough to subject himself to their capricious whims.

“A lady who was present undertook the defence of her sex, with a great degree of spirit; and concluded with assuring the signor, that there existed, at least, one virtuous woman; and, in the hope of eradicating his unjust opinion, she determined, notwithstanding the pain which the recital would cause her, briefly to relate her friend’s adventures.

“She then informed him, that signora Ottavia was of noble parents, who had also two sons, both older than herself;

self; that she was, at an early age, placed in a convent, where it was intended she should pass the remainder of her days. In this sacred abode, whither the signora who related the story was also sent for her education, she first became acquainted with Ottavia, and soon possessed so entirely her affection, that she entreated her father would suffer her to reside in the convent until her friend had taken the veil. She was young, and inexperienced in the ways of the world—an honour to her family, and that community of which she was soon to become a member. In her was blended a pure love of religion, with that becoming dignity, the uniform concomitant of unsullied virtue. As the time approached which was to part them for ever, the signora's grief became so poignant, that she could no longer conceal it. Her friend endeavoured by every argument to reconcile her to their approaching separation, when the signora was astonished

nished at the happy temperament of her mind, which so well accorded with those vows she was destined to take.

“ A few weeks previous to the time when the signora was to forfeit the pleasing serenity which used to gild her tranquil days in the society of donna Ottavia, she was summoned to the grated parlour, whither she went, accompanied by her friend. She there found her brother, who came with a letter from the signor her father. Finding it necessary to return a written answer, she begged that donna Ottavia would be kind enough to wait at the grate, and quitted the parlour.

“ At the signora’s return, she found her brother gazing on the features of her friend with particular earnestness: donna Ottavia’s figure was indeed most interesting, and every way calculated to arrest the attention.

“ The signora,” said Patelli, “ then described her features. Her eyes were

black, and possessed a captivating sweetness, being crowned with eyebrows narrow and beautifully arched. Her forehead was fair and open, over which her dark brown hair fell in natural ringlets. Indeed, conte, her description was that of a second Venus ! The signora's brother, for some time, delayed his departure from the convent ; and, on quitting them, she observed her friend's features alternately vary, and during the remainder of the day, she was absent and restless.

“ As they were, a few mornings after, distributing alms to some poor people at the grate, the signora's brother again made his appearance. At sight of him, blushes suffused the fair face of her friend donna Ottavia, and she retired with precipitation.

“ The signora's brother immediately began questioning her minutely concerning her friend. She demanded the motive of his interrogatory ; and the answer

swer was, what she had expected, an avowal of his passion for her friend Ottavia.

“ It was a justice she owed her brother, and, though painful the truth must prove to him, she determined, for his sake, not to conceal it. The signora instantly made him acquainted with her friend’s being destined by her parents to take the veil. The intelligence threw him into despair, and he exclaimed bitterly against the cruelty of the measure.

“ The signora was prevailing on him to moderate his passion, when turning her head, she beheld her friend Ottavia gazing at him with a look of astonishment. Recovering herself, she delivered a message from the lady abbess to the signora, who immediately rose to obey the summons. Donna Ottavia was also quitting the parlour; but the signora’s brother caught her hand through the grate. The signora heard not what passed between them, for she proceeded



instantly to the superior's chamber, secretly wishing that her brother's entreaties might touch her friend, though her own had proved ineffectual.

“ On quitting the lady abbess, the signora returned to the parlour ; but her brother was gone, and her friend Ottavia had left the grate. She hurried to her chamber, and found her kneeling at her devotion.

“ As she rose, her features wore their wonted serenity, and they proceeded to the garden, where the signora pleaded her brother's cause, and attempted to prevail on her to accept her parents' mansion as an asylum ; adding, that they would be proud to receive her as their daughter.

‘ Cease your vain endeavours,’ said donna Ottavia ; ‘ I have determined to act in unison with my father's will.’

“ In vain the signora argued, that, if parents were unjust, and strove to check their children's happiness, their authority

was



was no longer valid. Donna Ottavia replied, by telling her, that when her advice coincided with her duty, she would with pleasure listen to her.

“As the signora, after several conversations, could not prevail with her to yield to her entreaties, she at length wrote to her brother, advising him to make his passion known to his father, and request of him to solicit donna Ottavia’s hand of her parents. Two days after receiving this letter, the signora’s brother paid a visit to the convent. His looks sufficiently bespoke the displeasing intelligence he had to communicate. He informed her that proposals had been made to donna Ottavia’s father, which were instantly rejected. The signora’s brother then gave her a letter, which he begged she would deliver to her friend.

“As soon as he had quitted the convent, the signora found an opportunity of presenting it to donna Ottavia, who

received it with great emotion, and having perused the contents, exclaimed — ‘No; amiable as you are, your arguments are fallacious; nor will I yield to them.’

‘Ah!’ cried the signora, ‘why decline my brother’s hand and heart? Why consent to be immured for ever? He is handsome, he is amiable, and he loves you.’

“The tear glittered in Ottavia’s eye; she attempted to speak, but could not, and abruptly quitted the signora, who, finding her thus fixed in her resolve, felt the greatest uneasiness on her brother’s account. She likewise observed the alteration in the appearance of her friend, who, notwithstanding, was calm, and resigned to her destiny. Ottavia had ever been strict in her religious duties; but she now became more devout than ever. The signora was convinced how much she loved her brother, though she

she perceived that her friend was ignorant of the truth.

“ Shortly after the signora received a letter from her unhappy brother, wherein he acquainted her, that, despairing of ever gaining Ottavia’s consent to a private union, he had accepted a post in the army, where he hoped to lose that life which was now become a burthen to him. He then requested an interview with his sister ere he left Florence, and entreated that she would prevail on her friend to be present.

“ The signora made known to Ottavia her brother’s request, and she, in the innocence of her heart, yielded to the entreaty.

“ The day arrived when the signora was to bid a beloved brother an everlasting farewell. The parting was solemnly affecting: he took his sister’s and her friend’s hands—he pressed them to his heart; again he entreated Ottavia to comply with his ardent request.

‘ Oh !’ cried she, ‘ do not lessen yourself in my esteem, for I can bear with resignation any ill but the sting of conscience.’

“ He then knelt—he kissed their hands; then suddenly rising, pressed his sister to his palpitating heart, and in an agony of grief, exclaimed—‘ Farewell for ever!’ He then cast a look of anguish on Ottavia, and precipitately left the apartment.

“ Shortly after the departure of the signora’s unhappy brother, a messenger arrived at the convent, with orders for Ottavia’s being conveyed to her father’s palace, her two brothers having suddenly died of a malignant fever.

“ Ottavia being now the only remaining child, her father looked up to her for the support of his house and title. The signora accompanied her to her father’s residence, where she remained for some weeks; and soon after her return home, her parents received the unwelcome

come news of her brother's death. The melancholy tidings were augmented by the knowledge of his having willingly sought his fate.

“ Here, conte, the signora paused; the painful recollection claimed the tributary tear.”

Signor Patelli then informed the conte, “ that his friend, who had attentively listened to the narrative, became highly interested in the fate of the beautiful donna Ottavia; and from that moment (strange as it may appear) felt a violent passion for her. Joy became a stranger to him—sleep fled from his pillow—his mind was restless and unhappy.

“ This unaccountable attachment,” continued the signor Patelli, “ originated in the signora's glowing description of her friend; she was the only woman, he thought, that could render him happy.

“ I persuaded him to apply to her father, as I was convinced his overtures  
would

would not be rejected, his family being noble, and his possessions large. He did not hesitate, but immediately followed my advice; and, as I expected, his proposals were favourably received.

“ My friend seemed to exist only in the company of her who, in description alone, had thus strangely captivated him. This affection daily increased; and, by his unremitting attentions, he strove to inspire her with sentiments congenial to his own; but he failed in the attempt—her heart was still fixed on the signora’s brother, though she had learnt his death, and strove to conquer the predilection in his favour.

“ She, one day, informed my friend that his assiduities had insured him her everlasting esteem. She told him how much she pitied his passion, for it could never be returned; and concluded by assuring him, that notwithstanding, if it was his desire, she would obey her father’s commands, and become his wife.

“ My



“ My friend,” continued Patelli, “ had a soul too generous to purchase his own happiness at the expence of another’s misery—too much honour to marry a woman whose affection he did not possess. After such a declaration, therefore, he discontinued his addresses. I applauded his resolution, and repaired with him the same evening to the mansion of her father, who, though mortified at my friend’s rejecting his alliance, did not condescend to inquire into the cause of his conduct.

“ Thus, in the bloom of youth, my friend became a prey to sorrow. I forced him into company, and never left him but when indispensable business required my absence. I formed small parties of pleasure—I courted gaiety, the dance, and music; but every effort failed; he partook not of the pleasures that surrounded him. His grief was silent, and, canker-like, preyed on his wounded heart;



heart; for, in a few months, I had to mourn his loss."

The signor Patelli turned his head, and the big tear coursed down his cheek. The conte was much affected; but perceiving that the recollection greatly agitated him, changed the subject, by inquiring what became of the unhappy Ottavia. Signor Patelli then informed him, "that her father dying two years after his friend's decease, left her at liberty to follow the bent of her own inclination; when she immediately retired to the convent where she had been educated, and soon after took the veil."

The conte thanked the signor for the recital, and soon after the duca Bertocci advanced towards them.

Signor Patelli, rising, introduced the conte, with whose conversation the duca was charmed, while the vivacity and  
grace

grace with which he delivered his opinions on the various topics of their conversation, completely fascinated him.

The duca sometimes yielded for a moment to melancholy reflections. His son, he thought, had he lived, might have proved as handsome and as amiable as the conte Marcello.

Ere he departed, he gave the conte a general invitation to his palace, which was joyfully accepted, both on account of the respect he felt for the duca, and the belief that he was father of the enchanting boarder of Santa Maria.

## CHAP. III.

The time presses now, and we cannot use the circumstances necessary to persuade you ; but whatever appears strange at this time to you, a few days will render most familiar.

SEDLEY.

.....

Descend, ye Nine, descend and sing ;  
The breathing instrument inspire ;  
Wake into voice each silent string,  
And sweep the sounding lyre ;  
In a sadly-pleasing strain,  
Let the warbling lute complain.

POPE.

THE conte was roused at hearing the clock strike eleven. He took a hasty leave of his friend Viviani, and, quitting the company, immediately proceeded towards the convent of Santa Maria.

As he gained the great entrance of the church, which he had to pass in his way  
to

to the door by which he entered the cloisters, he was surprised at hearing a shrill whistle issue from behind him. He turned his head, and saw three men come forth from the archway; they were muffled in their cloaks, and their broad-rimmed bonnets concealed their features.

The conte continued his pace, and heard their footsteps not far behind him. The spot was dreary, it being a remote and unfrequented part of the city—still they followed, and the conte distinguished these words:—"It must be him; I know his person too well to be mistaken."

He now approached the door through which he was to enter, when they quickened their pace, and soon were close upon him: he turned; and at that instant, three naked rapiers were opposed against his body. The conte instantly  
drew

drew his sword, and placing his back against the convent-wall, determined at least to sell his life dearly. The over-eagerness of the first villain put him off his guard, and the conte, at one thrust, laid him dead at his feet. At that instant, he felt one of the rapiers pierce his left arm, and saw the other directed at his breast : he had sufficient presence of mind to drop on one knee; and the weapon, which was meant to pierce his body, struck against the wall with such violence, that it instantly snapped short off, leaving nothing but the hilt within the villain's grasp. The conte quickly made a thrust; the aggressor staggered, and with a groan fell to the ground. The third, from whom he had received the wound, either through fear, or thinking himself unable to cope with the superior skill of the conte, immediately effected his escape.

The conte proceeded to the door of  
the

the cloisters, which he found open, as he had done on the preceding night. He descended, and closing again the door, seated himself on the same step. The wound which he had received became painful, and he felt the blood trickling fast down his arm: he tore open the sleeve of his dress, and bound his handkerchief round the wound: this, in a great measure, prevented the farther effusion of blood.

The conte now recollected the two villains, who had, ere this time, in all probability, breathed their last. He determined on examining their faces, in the hope of discovering who they were, or, if either of them was yet living, to extort from him a confession of the motives that had instigated this bold attempt on his life. He quitted the cloisters, and proceeded to the spot; but his astonishment is not to be described, on finding that both the bodies had disappeared.



peared. He was returning to the cloisters, when the moon threw her silver light full upon the place where the congealed blood was visible. Something glittering attracted the conte's eye : he advanced, and found it to be a diamond cross of most beautiful workmanship.—“ This,” thought the conte, placing it in his vest, “ may one day lead to a development of the mystery.”

He returned to the cloisters, where he found the monk, with folded arms, pacing quickly to and fro.—“ You are then at length arrived, signor,” said he to the conte. “ I must tell you that I began to doubt you.”

“ Half-an-hour is not elapsed, good father, since I myself believed it impossible that we should ever meet again.”

“ Indeed ! and is this your boasted firmness, signor ?” returned the friar, with an air of disdain.

“ Judge not thus meanly of me, father ;

ther; neither condemn me hastily," answered the conte. "I came at the appointed hour, and was in these cloisters ere you yourself appeared; but my life has been basely attempted."

"Your life attempted!" hastily repeated the friar, while an air of astonishment marked his haggard visage.

The conte then briefly related what had happened; while the monk, with folded arms and eyes bent to the earth, listened to the recital. He remained in this position for a considerable length of time after the conte had finished speaking: the mysterious workings of his soul were visible in his dark countenance: at length, raising his head, and darting a look at the conte that petrified him, muttered—" 'Tis most strange!" Then suddenly recollecting himself as from a dream, cried—"Tell me, signor, are you determined to take the oath?"

"I am, father," replied the conte.

The

The monk led the way through the same vaults he had traversed on the preceding night, and they soon entered the chapel; but it was not illuminated as before; one large silver lamp, suspended opposite to the image of the Virgin, threw but an imperfect light around.

The monk ascended the steps of the altar, and presented the same missal to the conte.—“ Now, swear,” said he, in a sepulchral voice, “ that the name of the female whom you shall this night behold, or any circumstance relating to the conversation that passes between you, shall for ever remain locked in your own breast. Swear that you will neither by writing nor any other method, divulge the secret, though tortures should urge you to betray the mystery. Swear, in the name of the Lord God, his Blessed Son, and the immaculate Virgin, whose sainted image you now behold !”

The monk paused, and the conte, in  
a firm

a firm tone, replied—"I do swear to keep the secret inviolable; and when I falter in my resolution, may the wrath of offended Heaven at that moment annihilate me!—Yes, I swear by the Father Omnipotent, his martyred Son, and the pure Virgin, before whose altar I stand, never to violate my oath, though the rack should lacerate my body, though death in the most appalling shape should threaten me."

He pressed the missal to his lips, and again returned it into the monk's hands, who muttered forth a Latin prayer, and again replaced it on the altar.

The conte's heart beat high.—"Yes," thought he, "it is—it must be the lovely boarder."

The monk then opened a small door, which was well concealed on one side of the altar, and bad the count follow him.

They entered a passage ; but it was unlike those which they had passed in their way from the cloisters to the chapel, being illuminated by small lamps placed at equal distances, and the pavement covered with a thick matting.

They soon gained a narrow flight of steps, and ascended the same : here they pushed back a sliding door, which the conte had no sooner passed, than he found himself in a spacious gallery, a large lamp being suspended from the centre, around the same hanging several ancient pictures of saints and scriptural subjects. There were also portraits of nuns as large as life, and amongst them, one that particularly struck the conte's attention. It represented a most beautiful woman, clad in monastic vestments : she was kneeling, and supported in her arms a knight arrayed in complete armour ; his helmet lay by him ; from his neck ran a stream of blood ; and a deadly paleness

paleness marked his countenance: the nun, with streaming eyes turned towards Heaven, seemed supplicating the Almighty's aid; and on the shield of the knight, which seemed falling from his unnerved arm, were these words:

Bloody and cruel—yet most brave,  
By whose dread arm I found a grave;  
Yet, in my seat thou'rt not secure,  
Time, creeping time, works slow and sure.

Emotions of pity agitated the conte's breast on beholding the female represented in this picture, and the ashy countenance of the knight had something in it that enchained his regard. At length, recollecting his situation, he turned to look for the monk, but he had disappeared. He proceeded to examine the door by which he had entered the gallery, but could not perceive it. The conte applied his hand; but the old brown wainscot was compact, and yielded not in the least to his pressure.



“ This is most extraordinary ! ” exclaimed the conte.

He then proceeded to the further end of the gallery, where he found a large folding door ; but it was well secured on the other side.—“ What can this mean ? ” thought he, as he slowly returned along the gallery, and involuntarily stopped before the same picture, which again inspired him with the most unaccountable sensations. Unconsciously, the tears flowed from his eyes, and fell upon the hand which rested on his bosom, to ease the pain which he felt from the wound in his arm. At that instant, a voice, accompanied by a lute, struck his ear. He listened attentively, and heard these words :—

Hail, blessed Mary ! at thy shrine  
My fervent orisons incline :  
To thee my trembling notes ascend ;  
To thee my willing knee I bend ;

To praise thy name I sing,  
And touch the plaintive string,  
While chaste desire  
My lays inspire,  
My bosom glows with holy fire.

As the last note died upon the ear, the conte could scarcely believe a human voice capable of uttering such melodious sounds. He for some minutes thought it a delusion; but reflection soon convinced him of his error. He advanced towards the casement, which appeared nearest to the spot whence the tones had issued. His course was arrested ere he gained it, by the same voice, which continued as follows :—

Methinks I view that pitying eye,  
In which enthron'd sits Chastity;  
That meek, that melancholy mien,  
Beaming a heav'nly smile serene;  
Where, line for line, I trace  
My lov'd Redeemer's face,  
His look benign,  
His air divine,  
Where mingled love and mercy shine.

He remained transfixed to the spot with wondering admiration. He listened, in the hope of hearing a repetition of the strain: but all was silent as the grave. Suddenly, the abbey-clock struck four: amazed at the hour, he again advanced to the casement, which commanded the view of an extensive garden, on which the moon threw a partial light. He beheld the dark trees wave graceful in the wind, and the grey mist of night dispersing at the first approach of Aurora's smiling face.

“How still, how sublime is this scene!” exclaimed the conte, struck with awful admiration. “How wonderful are thy works, oh Nature! What soul is there can behold, and not adore thee? Why should dull sleep, at this calm hour, formed only for contemplation, enfold within its arms so many millions of souls, that might enjoy a bliss unclouded? Yet surely some there are  
that

that own thy charms, whose minds confess thy powerful influence ! Yes, within these sacred walls, a spotless being dwells ! Oh ! it must be so ! no form but that which hath subdued my soul could half so sweetly sing !”

The conte stood musing for some time : a sigh floated by him : he turned, but no one was near him.—“ Surely,” cried he, “ I was not deceived.” He listened attentively, and soon after heard a noise at the farther end of the gallery. He looked round, and beheld the monk approach.—“ What means this behaviour, father ?” said the conte, angrily. “ Why was I left here in suspense ? You could harbour suspicions of *my* honour : in what light can I view *your* conduct ?”

“ Signor,” replied the monk, hastily, “ throw not your shafts of reproach at me ; I am not to blame, nor bound to answer for the faults of others. You

cannot this night see the signora ; a circumstance the most unexpected has prevented her fulfilling the engagement which I made on leaving you. I thought you would have been immediately summoned hence into her presence ; nor have many minutes elapsed since I became acquainted with the circumstance which has occasioned the breach of promise. This night you must not come ; but to-morrow, if you will meet me at the same hour as usual, I solemnly pledge my word that you shall not be disappointed."

" I accept the apology, father, and will not fail."

The conte would willingly have conversed longer ; but the forbidding looks of the monk checked his desire. He was then led through the folding door which he had noticed soon after his entrance into the gallery. Having descended a wide staircase, and traversed  
several

several passages and spacious chambers which bore an air of desertion, he opened a small gate, the upper part of which was latticed, and the conte again found himself in the cloisters. The monk, as on the preceding night, attended him to the door, and bowing his head, closed and locked it after him.

When the conte gained the spot where he had been attacked the preceding night, he saw the blood and the shattered blade of the sword yet lying on the pavement. As he passed, he inwardly returned thanks to Heaven for his preservation, and offered a prayer for those whom he had, in all probability, slain in his own defence. On regaining his palace, he found the servants, by whom he was adored, and who, for the most part, had grown old in his father's service, assembled in the hall, full of apprehensions for his personal safety; it being the first time he had ever for a



whole night absented himself from the palace. As he passed, they could not help testifying their joy in audible terms. He was affected at this proof of their regard, and hastily proceeded to his chamber, followed by his trusty Gerardo, who unable to keep silence, thus began—"Dear maestro, we have all been frightened to death; each of us, by turns, strove to form some plausible excuse for your absence; but as we knew that you never before slept from the palace, they were too trifling to satisfy our minds. Tomaso then told us a terrible story of a young nobleman at Naples, who one night quitted his palace to visit a friend, and has never since been heard of. This terrified us more than ever; and falling upon our knees, we began to pray for your safety; and by the Madona de Loretto, we found ourselves more courageous. I then said that I would go forth to seek you. Tomaso joined me; and I verily believe

believe we traversed every place, street, and alley in Florence; nor is it an hour since we returned. But, my dear maestro, you look pale! and your arm! Oh, St. Jeronimo, what has happened?"

"Be not alarmed," said the conte, smiling; "it is but a slight wound I have received."

"Oh, my dear lord, but I will fetch the surgeon."

"There is no occasion, Gerardo."

"So you say, maestro; but he will be the best judge of that."

Without waiting for a reply, he flew out of the apartment, and, heedless of the servants' inquiries, who all stood in the hall ready to receive him, he ran like a madman into the street, and was out of sight in a moment.

At this early hour, for it was scarcely five o'clock, neither the surgeon nor any of the family was stirring; but Gerardo,

whose impatience on the present occasion could ill brook delay, began thundering at the portal, with all the vehement strength of which he was master. The surgeon was not the only person that answered the summons: the inhabitants of some of the adjoining houses felt the effects of his powerful blows; and the windows exhibited a most ludicrous assortment of affrighted faces of both sexes, who, screaming, inquired the cause of the disturbance. Gerardo, deaf and dumb to every interrogatory, save that of the surgeon, instantly made him acquainted with the necessity there was for his immediate attendance on his dear maestro.

“ I will speedily be with him,” said the surgeon, closing the window.

This answer was not satisfactory enough for Gerardo, who began a second time lustily handling the knocker.

The

The surgeon opened the window, and demanded what he would have.

“ You must come immediately, and just as you are,” returned Gerardo.

“ I cannot,” replied the surgeon ; “ I am not yet dressed.”

“ Then will I continue knocking.”

“ Hold, hold !” cried the surgeon ; “ if your maestro is really so ill, I will go immediately.”

He descended, without farther hesitation, his stockings hanging over his ankles, his vest unbuttoned, and his cloak, fastened only at one shoulder, trailing on the ground. Gerardo instantly set to his heels ; but the surgeon, who was not, through age, quite so swift of foot, thought a nimble walk would be sufficient : he was, however, mistaken ; for Gerardo, perceiving his intention, returned, and, catching hold of his arm, fairly dragged him to the palace

lace of Marcello Porta. He immediately led the way to his maestro's apartment, where the surgeon naturally thought that he should find the conte at the point of death ; but his astonishment, on entering, to behold him dressed, and sitting at the table, is not to be described. He made an awkward bow, and, turning to Gerardo, who stood at the door, gave him a look more expressive than language can paint. The conte with difficulty suppressed his laughter at the singular appearance of the wonder-struck doctor. He rose, and begged that he would be seated. This motion of the conte contributed, if possible, to heighten the astonishment of the practitioner, who, hesitating, begged to know if his presence had not been required? The conte motioned Gerardo to withdraw, which order he obeyed with reluctance, when the conte made the surgeon acquainted with the reason and manner of Gerardo's quitting

ting him; adding, that he was sorry he should have disturbed him at such an early hour. The doctor, in his turn, related what had passed between him and Gerardo, at which the conte could not forbear smiling, but hoped he would impute it to the love he bore his master; not forgetting to tell him at the same time, that his extraordinary trouble on the present occasion should not go unrewarded. Well satisfied with this conclusion of the conte's sentence, the surgeon made a low bow, and returning him many thanks, begged he might be permitted to look at his arm. The handkerchief, with which the conte had bound it, being taken off, he immediately declared that the wound was of little consequence; and, dressing it, told the conte, that he had a slight fever, usually attendant in such cases, and must remain quiet during the day. He then took his leave, promising to return early in the evening.

In



In the course of the day, signor Viviani called on the conte, who was much astonished at the base attempt made upon his life, when the conte produced the diamond cross he had found. They both minutely inspected it, in the hope of finding some name or cypher, which might lead to the developement; but the search was fruitless. They, by turns, named every person they knew, and examined their different characters, as far as they were enabled, from their knowledge; but they were all on such terms of friendship with the conte, as to preclude the possibility of attaching guilt to any one. Viviani, smiling, asked the conte, if he had not been engaged in an amour—"For, in that case," continued he, "you may have received the wound from some rival, whose name and person you are equally unacquainted with."

The conte assured him he was involved in no such adventure, at least  
none

none that could endanger his safety—  
“ No one is acquainted with the object of my affections : I never yet conversed with, or was in her company ; it is therefore impossible that any one should form a supposition of her name, or the place of her residence, the secret being vested solely in my own bosom.”

“ But may there not be some mistake ?” said Viviani : “ your person perhaps resembles that of the signor whose life the villains sought.”

“ It cannot be,” returned the conte ; “ the sentence I overheard, sufficiently proves that one of them, at least, was acquainted with me. But we will give up the fruitless search, and leave the discovery to time and chance.”

The conte having invited Viviani to spend the day with him, they amused themselves with conversing on various topics, among which donna Laura was not forgotten. Viviani was desirous to  
learn

learn more of his friend's love-affair; but the conte assured him, that he could not yet, in the smallest degree, gratify his curiosity. In the evening, the surgeon called, and dressed the conte's wound, which, he said, was in a fair way; and at a late hour Viviani left the palace.

The following morning, the conte was occupied in bringing to his memory the conversation which had passed between him and signor Patelli, concerning the duca di Bertocci, whose character he admired, but whose extraordinary conduct, in so mysteriously replacing his daughter in the convent of Santa Maria, after having experienced her filial tenderness, he could by no means account for. Suddenly, an idea struck him, and he exclaimed—"Good heavens! the duca cannot surely design his child for a monastic life!" The mere suggestion inflicted agony on his mind.—"No! rather than Maddalena

Rosa

Rosa shall become a victim against her inclinations, I will hazard life and fortune to release her! Ah, fool that I am! I possess no legal power over her, nor dare I dispute her father's will; yet wherefore do I thus torment myself with these suppositions? Should a life of celibacy be her choice, should she wish to become a sister in the convent of Santa Maria, I sicken at the very idea; my hopes, my happiness, which I have staked, are then lost for ever! yet there is a beam of comfort; to-night I am to see and converse with this mysterious female. Ah, would not Maddalena herself be thus cautious? Yes, it must be so!—delightful thought! I will hug thee to my breast!”

Thus did the conte indulge his reflections, and the tedious hours dragged heavily away: with joy he greeted the sombre veil of night, when, arming himself, he quitted the palace, and arrived  
in

in safety at the appointed spot. The clock struck eleven as he closed the well-known door, and descended into the cloisters.

## CHAP. IV.

—————" But with true prayers,  
That shall be up at heav'n, and enter there  
Ere sunrise—prayers from preserved souls,  
From fasting maids, whose minds are delicate  
To nothing temporal."

THE sisterhood of Santa Maria were very numerous: its wealth had conferred a superiority over all the convents of Florence and its environs. The daughters of most of the nobility were forwarded thither for their education, many of whom became so fascinated with the charms of religion, that they preferred the silence of the cloister to the noisy and tumultuous scenes of life. There is a sacred charm in solitude—there is an indescribable enthusiasm, that captivates the cultivated mind; eagle-pinioned,



nioned, the aerial soul ascends the upper heaven; there the warmed brain engenders thoughts divine; and man's corporeal substance, like a thick nauseous vapour of deep night, melts before the pure æther of the brain. 'Tis then man pictures to himself the boundless space of eternity; 'tis then he feels, 'tis then he owns, a power incomprehensible; swift as the hot bolt of heaven, it strikes his mind; the radiant sun of pleasure beams on him, as, bowing, he confesses the glorious truth; o'ercome with joy, in ecstasy he dies, to live again immortal.

On Maddalena's entrance into the convent of Santa Maria, she found a soul congenial with her own; the gentle donna Orsini possessed a spirit dignified and virtuous. She had none of that frivolity of character, the common attendant on youth. An innate love of virtue, and a contempt for every thing  
that

that appeared mean, was the basis on which she reared her mind. Those pursuits which mankind disdain, her genius cultivated with the utmost avidity. Her parents mistook that rigid virtue for pride, and the giddy throng condemned her, because incapable of judging of her worth. She was banished from society, to make room for a younger sister, more calculated to adorn it.

Without a pang, she quitted that world, for which she felt no other sensation than that of pity.

It was not till after her second entrance into the convent, that donna Orsini took the veil. They soon felt a strong regard for each other.

Congenial passions souls together bind,  
And every calling mingles with its kind.

Their days were spent in cultivating this friendship, and mutually affording instruction

instruction to each other's mind. In the morning, they would together offer up their prayers to Heaven, and afterwards contemplate the glorious scene before them.

The chamber in which Maddalena Rosa slept was elevated, and on the side of the convent overlooking the surrounding country, whence the prospect was sublimely beautiful. To the left, arose a chain of hills, interspersed with small villages, verdant meadows, lofty forests, and noble palaces, forming a variegated scene, that displayed at once the population, industry, and riches of the country. To the right, a rich plain presented itself, intersected by the river Arno, that wound its transluscent waters, reflecting the dazzling beams of the sun, resembling a stream of liquid gold, terminating in the azure distance.

Such was the view that for hours attracted

tracted their regard, and instilled more forcibly into their minds the purest love of nature. How many glorious reflections did not these scenes produce—ideas, that would have graced the sage's tongue, and adorned the lips of grey philosophy! At night, the lovely Maddalena would chant the hymn of praise, and watch alone the glorious orb of night. How often, at this solemn hour, would she regret the absence of her friend Orsini, whose rigid duty, since she had assumed the veil, obliged her to sleep in a different part of the convent!

Those myriads of scintillating stars, on which Maddalena fixed her pensive looks, inspired her with boundless thoughts of Omniscient greatness. The silver moon, that floated in the vast expanse of heaven, threw her pallid beams on the dark sheet of water beneath. Sometimes, a vessel would stilly glide along its surface, aided by the gentle

VOL. I. F breeze,

breeze, that, kissing, swelled its broad white sails. Sometimes the sound of oars would strike upon the ear, and, plunging in the silvery deep, ruffled her glassy bosom. Oft-times would she listen to the peasant's song, as he, with folded arms, proceeded along its margin. The mourning willow waved graceful in the air, which, gently kissing, seemed to partake its sorrows. Unconsciously, the liquid gem would grace Maddalena Rosa's eye, and falling on her ivory neck, resembled a glittering dew-drop on the milk-tinctured lily. 'Twas then, when her soul o'erflowed with ecstasy divine, that her hand caught the lute; 'twas then her fingers struck the trembling chords, which, in unison with her melodious voice, breathed a strain of sweetest harmony. Such were Maddalena Rosa's sensations, at the silent hour of midnight.

There were many of the nuns and  
boarders

boarders that possessed her esteem; but the sisterly affection which she felt for the beautiful Orsini, whose titular name in the convent was Marietta, no one shared but herself. Maddalena had studied most of their dispositions, but found no other so congenial to her own. The madre Vittoria Bracciano had a forbidding stateliness in her deportment, which inspired sensations of fear rather than of esteem. Whenever she appeared among the sisterhood, a silent awe was depicted on every countenance: her will was obeyed through fear, rather than complied to with cheerfulness. If she conversed, it was in a haughty tone, that bespoke her conscious superiority, and the honour which she conferred on her auditors. Such manners could not fail to attract the attention of Maddalena, who wished to examine the mind framed to adopt such conduct. On acquiring the knowledge, she did not find that



aversion diminish she first entertained for the superior of the convent.

Sister Beatrice, the chosen friend of her bosom, was despised and hated by the community. She was of a malignant disposition; holding that virtue in seeming contempt, which she had not power to imitate, though inwardly confessing its worth. Soon after Maddalena Rosa's return to the convent, she had, with several others, for some unknown reason, incurred this nun's hatred. Not a day passed, but some complaints respecting her conduct were preferred before the lady abbess, who never failed inflicting penance for the alleged fault. Sister Beatrice was the only daughter of a family of distinction in Naples; and though her education had been attended to with the most unremitting attention, yet that untoward disposition, which in her infancy betrayed itself, ripened till she attained years  
of

of maturity. Her hand had been sought by men of distinction, on account of the immense wealth of which she would be possessed at her father's death. She seemingly encouraged their addresses, though predetermined in her own heart never to connect herself with any of them. At length, she became the real slave of that passion, so many had only pretended to feel for her. A young and amiable nobleman of Naples, possessing an elegant person, was the object of her attachment; but his heart was pre-engaged to a being equally amiable with himself. Ere long, she made her sentiments known; when she had the mortification to find that another possessed his affections. His parents, dazzled by the splendour of her fortune, would have sacrificed their son's happiness at the shrine of ambition; but he remained firm to his attachment, and resisted all their importunities. She dissembled her resentment, but a rancour corroded her

F 3

heart,

heart, and she retired to meditate on some stratagem that might for ever destroy his peace, and that of the woman whom he loved.

Her parents too soon ascertained the state of her heart. With pain they saw the strong workings of her passions; her friends tried to comfort her: she treated them with contempt; she spurned their kindness, which she deemed insolence. Society became odious to her, because she supposed each breast acquainted with her disappointment. For many days she sat alone, brooding on schemes of revenge. Her prolific brain, at last, suggested a plan—suddenly she wore the feigned appearance of cheerfulness. Her credulous parents, deceived by this cloak, fondly hoped that she had conquered her passion; her every wish was complied with, and she enjoyed unlimited indulgence. Again she mingled with the gay throngs of Naples: her former

former lovers fluttered around her, and she once more beheld a train of suitors awaiting on her smiles.

For some time her parents enjoyed a happiness unclouded. Suddenly, the youth who had rejected her hand was missing; every search was made after him, but without success. A few days after, a stranger arrived at her father's house, who after being closeted with him for some time, departed, and she was instantly summoned into her father's presence, where she remained during the whole of the day. At night, accompanied only by him, she quitted Naples, and, taking a circuitous route, they travelled to Florence, where she was immediately conveyed to the convent of Santa Maria. All her entreaties were of no avail; a large sum of money was given to the convent; several relics were purchased, at an enormous expence, to adorn the chapel of the Virgin; and a

F 4

rich

rich casket of jewels was presented to the madre Bracciano. Her father quitted her, without shedding a tear. She immediately commenced her noviciate; and at the expiration of the limited term, notwithstanding her reluctance, she was compelled to take the veil, which circumstance occurred shortly after Maddalena Rosa's entrance into the convent.

Such was Beatrice's character—such was the person that possessed, unrivalled, the domina's esteem.

In this manner months glided on, till the approach of the grand festival of the Annunciation. The convent was then all confusion; nothing was to be seen but preparations for the solemn occasion. Maddalena's mind partook not in the hurry of this scene; she beheld it with calm indifference.

On



On the eve of the sainted day, the lady abbess, attended by all the sisterhood and boarders of the convent, descended into the private chapel dedicated to the Virgin. Having read prayers, she gave into the hands of the younger nuns of the convent, the various relics there deposited. The sacred image of the Virgin was placed on a small pedestal, which was borne by the oldest sisters of the convent, who ascended to the church in the following order :—first, the novices, clad in loose white vestments, pendent to the ground, slowly proceeded, chanting a hymn of praise to their immaculate patroness ; next, proceeded those sisters honoured with the care of the numerous relics ; then, the elder nuns, bearing the pedestal on which rested the sainted image ; behind those, the lady abbess appeared, stately and proud in her demeanour ; after her, followed sister Beatrice, bearing on a damask cushion, beautifully embroidered with



gold, a missal bound in crimson velvet ; then came the rest of the nuns, telling their beads ; and lastly, the numerous boarders of the convent.

Having placed the various relics on the grand altar, the sisterhood, kneeling, chanted a second hymn. In the mean time, the madre Bracciano, followed by sister Beatrice, approached the lower step of the altar, and, taking from her the missal, which she presented on her knee, read a prayer ; then falling prostrate on the pavement, remained for some time in that position : rising, she ascended the steps of the altar, and there depositing the missal, she kissed the garments of the holy image, and then descended. Followed by the nuns, she proceeded to the smaller chapels, and placing on their altars those relics intended to adorn them, the ceremony ended, and they returned to the monastery.

The

The ensuing morning, at the appointed hour, the sisterhood took their seats behind the grate ; and as the pealing organ loud echoed through the vaulted choir, the curtain was drawn aside, and the nuns chanted their hymn of praise.

Maddalena Rosa, during some time, fixed her eyes on the ground. She raised them at length, and beheld the most engaging object her fancy had ever painted ; it was, indeed, no other than the conte Marcello Porta. She saw him but for an instant, his eyes being also bent upon her face. She withdrew her regard, a thousand contending ideas crowding on her agitated mind. She experienced a pleasure till then unknown ; she forgot the sacred ceremony then performing ; she pictured to her imagination nothing but the enchanting figure of the stranger in the church. " Surely," thought Maddalena, " he possesses a noble mind ;

that countenance proclaims him endowed with every virtuous qualification." A second time she raised her eyes, and still his gaze was fixed upon her: a deep glow overspread her cheek, as she bent them to the ground.

At the conclusion of mass, she retired with the sisterhood into the convent, and gaining her chamber, indulged those emotions that agitated her bosom. She wished for evening vespers.—“Perhaps,” thought she, “he may again be present, and I shall once more behold him.” She was interrupted in the train of her ideas, on hearing the bell summon the sisterhood to the refectory. She descended; but her appetite was fled; she paid no attention to the sumptuous entertainment that day prepared, nor to the lady abbess, who honoured them with her presence. After the repast, she was desirous of speaking with her friend Marietta, but was denied the satisfaction,

tisfaction, it being the rule of the convent of Santa Maria, that the nuns, on the feast of the Annunciation, should hold no conversation but with sisters who had also assumed the veil.

The knell at length proclaimed the approach of vespers ; she counted each heavy stroke, as it vibrated on the ear. Again she took her station behind the grate, and, as the curtain was gradually undrawn, beheld the same prepossessing figure. Her mind experienced a similar confused train of ideas to those that had before occupied it. Again she quitted the church, and passed into the convent.

She immediately proceeded to the garden ; all there was tranquillity : not one of the sisterhood or boarders was visible. Maddalena enjoyed this solitude : she strolled along her favourite path ; she entered the bower wherein she had experienced with Marietta so many tranquil,

quail, so many happy hours; but it seemed altered—she no longer felt the same pleasing emotions. She quitted it dissatisfied, and continued along the path. She stopped to view the tender violet, which had flourished beneath her fostering hand; it seemed to droop its azure head. Fain would she have wept before, but lacked excuse. She now burst into tears, and again returned to the bower. Throwing herself on the seat, she fell into a state of torpitude, whence she was at length awakened by Marietta, who, in spite of the penance that would await her, should she be observed conversing with any body but a sister, had ventured to seek her friend, whose attendance in the convent was required to warn her of the necessity there was for her immediate return. She left her, and proceeded to the convent by a different path from that which Maddalena pursued.

The



The nuns were nearly all assembled, to attend the lady abbess to the private chapel; and in the way to her chamber, Maddalena met many of the novices running hastily to the small corridor, where they were ordered to meet the madre Bracciano.

Having arranged her dress, she took her beads and crucifix, and soon joined the rest of the sisters. Luckily for her, the lady abbess was still absent: she looked for her friend Marietta, and felt uneasy at not finding her yet returned. —“ Ah!” thought Maddalena, “ how much am I to blame! should the madre or sister Beatrice appear, she will suffer for my fault.”

Her fears were soon quieted; for her friend at that moment entered the gallery. She cast around her an inquiring look, but seeing Maddalena, smiled, and immediately took her station. In  
a few



a few minutes the lady abbess appeared, who immediately proceeded at the head of the sisterhood into the grand church. Having as before given the various relics into the hands of the nuns, the image of the Virgin was again placed on the pedestal. In the same order as on the preceding day, the procession slowly passed into the convent, and thence to the private chapel, which was splendidly illuminated. Each precious relic being replaced in its situation, the lady abbess read prayers, and then commenced an exhortative discourse, wherein she expatiated largely on the sainted character of the immaculate Virgin. She represented in glowing colours, the joys which must await those, who, curbing their worldly desires, devoted themselves wholly to the service of their God; and lastly, touched upon the solemn festival they had been commemorating. At the conclusion of this harangue, the nuns chanted a short hymn  
to

to the Virgin, and retired into the convent.

Maddalena slowly withdrew to her chamber, on which the moon reflected her silvery light. She proceeded to the window—all nature was silent. She felt the cooling breeze that exhaled the odoriferous scent of flowers—the calmness of the scene, in some measure, pacified her troubled breast. She threw herself on her bed—sleep lay heavy on her eyelids, and she yielded to the powerful charm, death's counterfeit.

As she slept, a vision floated before her fancy: she thought that she again saw the amiable stranger in the church. His air was dignified, and he seemed more interesting, if possible, than when she had first beheld him. Suddenly, the grate which separated them mouldered away. He flew towards her, and knelt at her feet. At that instant, Maddalena

dalena imagined some one held her arm : turning, she thought the ghastly and forbidding figure of padre Ubaldo stood at her side. The youth then vanished, and in his place stood the madre Victoria. Rage marked every feature : in her uplifted hand she grasped a naked poniard, when the form of her friend Marietta, pale and emaciated, glided before her. Casting on her a look of ineffable pity, she disappeared ; and suddenly the scene faded before her. She then found herself in a spacious apartment, the walls of which were hung with black velvet, and in the middle stood a bier. Maddalena thought she surveyed the chamber, but no one was present ; and then proceeded to view the face of the deceased. She advanced to the spot where the coffin rested ; but, as she bent over, and raised the pall, the earth opened and received it. A female figure seemed to glide along, who, smiling, appeared to approach her.

It

It was again the nun Marietta. Maddalena thought she flew to meet her; but the figure changed to that of a handsome youth. She eyed him with attention, but had no recollection of his person. He clasped her to his breast in transport, and at that moment, Maddalena awoke.

She recollected the vision: every circumstance came fresh to her mind—she recurred to every incident with horror. Half rising, she looked around the apartment, on which the moon still faintly beamed. The abbey-clock struck three—again she dropped her head upon the pillow, but could not sleep. A secret dread stole over her senses.—“What can this mean?” she exclaimed, as, quitting her couch, she hastily covered herself with her garments.

Maddalena seated herself at the window; she beheld the accustomed scene.

Now

Now she recurred to the figure of the stranger in the church—every circumstance of her extraordinary dream followed. The pallid figure of her friend Marietta—the lady abbess—the monk Ubaldo—the sable chamber—the unknown youth who had pressed her in his arms—every one, by turns, occupied her bewildered mind. Thus the minutes passed, till the first dawn of day. Maddalena took up a book; it was calculated to fortify her mind against those idle fears that will at times intrude themselves on our fancies. She read a prayer, and felt composed; she placed it on the table, and, reclining her head upon her ivory hand, sat watching the approach of the blessed orb of day.

The morning was unclouded; the scintillating stars no longer glittered in the azure vault of heaven, but faded at the coming of the glorious charioteer. The eastern hills, from whose summits  
the



the nightly mists ascended, were tipped with gold refulgent. The shrill gorged cock, with clarion note, sang to the drowsy race of men. Now, from the frothy bosom of the ocean, mount the fiery steeds; neighing, they shake their ample manes, from which the dew ambrosial falls. The blazing chariot, borne on wheels of fire, next rises to the world, diffusing a smile of joy over Nature's blissful face. Now, the busy gondoliers unmoor their vessels, which move upon the spangled surface of the Arno. Now, the peasant, bearing on his sturdy shoulders the implements of labour, is seen crossing from the humble village that gave him birth, where his joys are all centered, to the rich vineyard, or the tufted forest. His ruddy countenance bears the stamp of happiness; as he turns, perhaps, to view the well-known spire, with pleasure he looks forward to the return of eve. A frugal wife prepares the wholesome meal, and prattling children



dren kiss the sun-burnt hand that earns their daily food. This scene, combining at once a glorious thought of heaven and the more simple pleasure that springs from the contemplation of earthly joys, restored tranquillity to Maddalena Rosa's bosom.

In the morning she was joined by sister Marietta. As she entered her apartment, the recollection of that part of the vision which related to her, struck forcibly on Maddalena's mind, and, notwithstanding her efforts to restrain them, her tears found a passage. The tender caresses of her friend served but to increase her dejection. Marietta wished to be made acquainted with its source. After many entreaties, Maddalena related her dream, leaving out every circumstance that concerned her friend. Marietta listened attentively to the relation, and, though she smiled, yet an apparent uneasiness was visible in her countenance.

countenance. By her caresses, Maddalena was soon restored to her usual tranquillity. Marietta then required to know who the stranger was, that she had in reality seen in the church the preceding day. Maddalena, blushing, then gave her friend a description of his captivating person. She confessed to her the various emotions that had since agitated her breast. Marietta listened to the relation with pity and surprise, and she perceived her friend's confusion during the recital. She saw the stifled tear again burst forth, and, as she concluded, Maddalena covered with both her hands her lovely face, rendered still more interesting by the translucent drop that graced it. Marietta gently pressed her to her bosom; she soothed, then offered her friendly counsel, the justness of which, though Maddalena could not deny, yet her love-sick mind had not sufficient resolution to adopt.—“ Oh, tell me,” cried she, “ that I may per-  
haps

haps once more behold him ! Tell me, my friend, that, from my description of his person, you think him virtuous ; say that, were you Maddalena Rosa, similar emotions would pervade your breast, on beholding such an object. Converse but in this strain, my Marietta, and I will listen to your enchanting words. Yes ; by day I will feast on them, and at night the recollection shall occupy my airy fancies.”

During the day Maddalena was never absent from her friend ; they strolled together in the garden ; they entered the interwoven bower, sacred to friendship, which diffused the woodbine’s rich perfume. They visited the tender violet—no longer it appeared to droop its head. Maddalena smiled. — “ Ah ! ” thought she, “ may this but prove the emblem of my wishes ! may my drooping thoughts, like this sweet flower, be cheered by the radiant sun of happiness.”

When

When night obliged Maddalena to quit her friend, she retired to her chamber. Ere dawn, she rose; her mind, glowing with enthusiasm, gave full vent to its feelings. She courted music's powerful aid, and drew the angelic choir from heaven to listen to her song.

These were the enchanting notes that struck the ravished conte's ear, when left by the monk Ubaldo in the antique gallery. These were the sounds which he justly attributed to this our lovely boarder.

Maddalena then, kneeling, offered to Heaven her suppliant orisons, relying on its fostering care for protection.

## CHAP. V.

This outward sainted deputy,  
 Whose settled visage and deliberate word,  
 Nips youth in th' head, and follies doth emmew,  
 As falcon doth the fowl, is yet a devil.

*Measure for Measure.*

.....

I have begun,  
 And now I give my sensual race the rein :  
 Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite ;  
 Lay by all nicety, and proluxious blushes,  
 That banish what they sue for.

*Measure for Measure.*

THE conte looked around—the monk was not arrived. He slowly proceeded along the cloisters, on which the moon beamed in full splendour. As he entered that angle which he had not passed on the preceding night, he perceived several objects which forcibly arrested his attention. He advanced ; they were

were the noble effigies of bodies long inurned: one, of grey marble, represented a venerable figure in the pontifical habit, whose beard hung low upon his breast; the mitre adorned his forehead, and his hand held the pastoral crosier. Around the base of the monument were images of the twelve apostles, in alabaster of various colours: under these were placed the escutcheons, whereon were emblazoned the prelate's arms. The conte looked around the tomb, but no inscription was remaining. A little farther, upon a most magnificent structure of black marble, rested the gigantic statue of a knight in his coat-armour. On his left arm was buckled a large shield, whereon were quartered his armorial bearings. His unclosed beaver presented a countenance fierce and commanding; the cushion whereon his head reclined, being supported by two angels on either side, and at his feet was a lion couchant, all of alabaster, most curiously wrought.



Over the effigy was a stone canopy of beautiful fret-work, from which rose Gothic spires, on whose points were sculptured numerous images—this sumptuous roof being supported by serpentine pillars of the richest porphyry. The conte examined the inscription, in the hope of finding the name of the person whose effigies were here represented; but his curiosity was not gratified; some monkish lines in Latin verse, recorded only the noble feats which, living, he had achieved, and concluded with naming him one of the chief patrons of the convent. There were several other inferior tombs, which merely attracted the conte's momentary gaze. "Ah," thought he, "what noble dust lies mouldering here! Where is now the pomp and pageantry, which, living, you enjoyed? Where is now the arm that bore yon stately crosier? Where the front that was encircled by that sacred mitre? And where the manly figure that was once cloathed in

in

in yon cumbrous suit of mail?—All mouldered, and become the food of loathsome worms! How humbled now your pride! You occupy no more space than that poor menial wretch, who once waited humbly on your smiles.

Long would the conte have indulged this train of moral reflections, but he was suddenly awakened from his melancholy reverie, at hearing some person open a door not far distant. He proceeded to the spot; it was the monk who entered the cloisters. On perceiving the conte, he beckoned him to approach, and entering the latticed door which he had passed on his quitting the convent, Ubaldo conducted him through the same suit of chambers. Again he was shown into the Gothic gallery, and left by the monk to indulge his meditations. Ere many minutes had elapsed, one of the nuns appeared, bearing in her hand a lamp, her face being covered with a

long black veil : she approached the conte, and in a low voice, requested that he would follow her, when she led him from the gallery by the same folding door he had entered, and after traversing some of the chambers which he had before passed, she struck into a narrow passage, at the end of which was a long corridor ; this they crossed. The nun then entered a spacious and well-furnished apartment, at the farther end of which they gained a door ; this his conductress opened, and by her action invited him to enter. She bowed her head as he passed, and, closing the door upon him, disappeared.

The conte found himself in a most sumptuous apartment, the cornices of which were gilt and highly burnished ; the panels were of light green, latticed with gold. Several Venice looking-glasses, of large dimensions, were so disposed as to heighten the magnificence of this

this enchanting scene, by reflecting to each other its numerous beauties. Rich curtains of green silk, with a broad fringe of gold, were suspended before the recesses of the windows. A magnificent sofa, supported on golden pillars, richly carved, and small couches, with trimmings correspondent to the curtains, were ranged around. Two rich cabinets of highly-polished steel, beautifully inlaid with gold and silver, were placed in two niches, on pedestals of similar workmanship. A rich Persian carpet of various dyes caught the beholder's attention, upon which an ebony table, wrought with tortoiseshell and ivory, stood in an alcove between the cabinets, spread with rich Florence wines and the choicest fruits. Elegant girandoles of cut glass held innumerable tapers, which threw a strong light on some of the most wonderful productions of the pencil.

In a large painting of the crucifixion,

fixion, were to be traced the divine touches of that sublime genius, Raphael. How exquisitely fine was the expression in the Madona's countenance! what sensations of pity did it not excite!—how great were the emotions that agitated the soul, at beholding the resigned, the melancholy face of the Saviour of mankind, as, languid, pale, and bloodless, it reclined on his shoulder!—what horror chilled the frame, as you fixed your regard upon the gaping wound, made in his holy side, from which his life's blood seemed distilling!

A grand performance of Michael Angelo, father of the Florentine painters, next astonished you for the correctness of its design—the subject was, the last supper; the figures and drapery were well disposed, and executed in a peculiar style of grandeur. The architectural part was chastely beautiful.

The

The exquisite colouring of that wonderful master, Leonardo da Vinci, whose cultivated genius, strong imagination, and correctness in the disposition of his figures, are not to be surpassed, was finely displayed in a performance of the last judgment. What divine majesty beamed in the Almighty's face!—what bliss was expressed in the countenances of those whose virtues insured them eternal happiness!—on the contrary, what agony, horror, and dismay, marked those, who, conscious of their evil deeds, awaited trembling, the justice of offended Heaven!

Several other fine pictures adorned this apartment. Having alternately examined each of them, the conte seated himself, and gazed on the surrounding scene with astonishment.

Suddenly his thoughts recurred to Maddalena Rosa. This sumptuous  
G 5 apartment



apartment instantly vanished from before his sight, and his mind's eye beheld nothing but her fascinating person: like a lovely vision, she floated before his warm fancy, and he painted to his imagination nothing but scenes of future bliss.

A panel of the chamber now shifted. Surprised, the conte directed his eyes to the spot. An elegant female, most sumptuously habited, entered the apartment, her face being concealed by a long veil. The aperture seemed to close after her, without human assistance. She gracefully advanced to the sofa, and seating herself with easy elegance, reclined her cheek upon her left hand, and with the other, courteously encouraged the conte to approach her. He arose, and was in an instant seated at her side.—“To whom am I indebted,” exclaimed he, “for this unlooked-for honour?”

honour? do I behold the charming object now before me——?”

“ Yes, signor, I am that female, who beheld the conte Marcello, and, seeing, could not choose but admire him.”

The voice that uttered these words was enchantingly sweet; the figure before him, tall and graceful. The conte for an instant felt surprised that she should have acquired the knowledge of his name: but this thought soon vanished.

“ Art thou then the object of my fervent adoration?” did he exclaim. “ Yes; it must be so.”

He was in a moment at her feet. Stretching forth her lovely hand, she desired him to rise. He seized and pressed it—he could not refrain, but raised it to his lips.—Again he resumed his situation on the sofa.

“ Conte, restrain the violence of your transports, and hear me,” said the beautiful stranger. He was silent, and she thus continued:—

“ Did not padre Ubaldo, that faithful monk of the convent of Santa Croce, administer to you an oath of secrecy?”

“ Signora, a holy father, whose name I was till now unacquainted with, did propose to me an oath: I swore, and will be secret.”

“ Conte,” said the female, “ that oath concerns me: I am the stranger whose name you are bound never to reveal; and learn from me, that I am noble as yourself, my birth being in every way equal to your own.”

The conte, now fully convinced that it must be the duca Bertocci’s daughter, exclaimed — “ Oh! name it not: birth, titles, are but air; your love on earth is all I would aspire to.”

“ Then, conte,” answered the female,  
in

in a confused, yet tender voice, “ *that* is yours already.”

At that moment her beautiful hand pressed that of the conte. What a delicious thrill ran through his feverish veins! Conceive the most delicate, small, and transparent hand, that ever nature formed, through which the branching streaks of blue were plainly visible. Imagine fingers pulpy, round, and taper, each joint of which was an opening rose-bud; and, to complete the picture, add nails long and beautifully formed, at the extremity of which appeared a tinge of the carnation. Such was the hand, which, pressing that of the conte, gently raised it to her breast.

“ Feel you my heart?” cried she, in a melting tone: “ is not its motion violent? tell me, conte, does it not bespeak a glowing passion? does it not betray how much I love? Ah! beats yours with  
such

such velocity? feel you the exquisite thrill of passion? retreats your blood beneath my touch? no, no! your heart is cold—insensible to my pressure.”

At each word her voice grew fainter; yet her tones were enchantingly sweet.

“Lovely creature,” cried the enraptured conte, “you wrong my love!”

Involuntarily he conveyed that bewitching hand to his bosom; he placed it on his heart; he held it there with fervour. Tumultuous boiled his youthful blood—his passions were on fire.

“Yes, oh yes!” cried she, “I feel the fluttering prisoner: but say, conte, is he then mine? beats he for me alone? does my breast from henceforth hold him captive?”

As

As she pronounced these words, her head sunk on his shoulder.

“ Yes, yes, dear fascinating creature,” returned the conte, “ your lovely bosom shall be his eternal prison.”

These words were spoken with difficulty—passion nearly stifled their utterance.

“ But let me seal my bond of faith upon those lips,” cried he.

As the conte spoke, he grasped the veil; she caught his arm, and bade him desist, on pain of her displeasure. The conte, dropping on his knee, intreated her pardon for his presumption; she kindly, and with the sweetest complacency, yielded him her forgiveness. Again he seized her unresisting hand—his feverish lips impressed on it a thousand burning kisses. Rising, he again threw himself at her side.

“ Ah !



“ Ah! it must be so,” cried the stranger.

“ What mean you, my angel?” hastily inquired the conte.

“ Why, I must, for the present, check the wildness of your passion,” continued she.

A soft sigh at that moment escaped her lips. His hand still held one of hers; the other resting on her lap, glowed beneath the bewitching touch of her ivory fingers. Again he raised hers to his breast—again he placed it on his heart, pressing with fervour that which lay upon her lap; she also guided his to her bosom. Her dress was thin; he felt the firm and beauteous breast that heaved beneath: the warmth communicated to his touch; his blood more fiercely boiled; with difficulty he contained his passion. She sunk—she dropped her head upon his shoulder. His face met that part of the veil which covered hers; he

he felt her breathe ; no fragrant flower that ever kissed the zephyrs of the morn was half so sweet. Overcome by her soft emotions, she, powerless, dropped his hand ; it gradually encircled her well-turned waist. The moisture of her quivering lips now damped the gauze, through which he could perceive their vermilion tint. The brilliancy of her full dark eyes, like the radiant star of morn, appearing through the fleeting mist, pierced the thin veil that half obscured their lustre, and rendered them more meltingly beautiful. Unable to resist, the conte's lips met hers, and their mouths were joined, copiously draining the rich nectar.—“ Now,” cried the conte, “ I seal my bond of faith.”

She gently repulsed him, and, rising from the couch, exclaimed, in a confused voice—“ 'Tis time you should refresh yourself.”

Hastily rising from the couch, she  
advanced

advanced to the table. The conte flew there before her; seizing a large goblet of pure embossed gold, he filled it to the brim with sparkling wine. On his knee, presenting it to her, he entreated that she would drink.

Her trembling hand took the cup.—“From you, my love,” said she, “I can refuse nothing.” With her left hand partly raising the veil, she but moistened her lips with the liquor, and again returned it to his hand.—“Now, conte, pledge me in your turn.”

The dew of her lip yet glittered on its brim; he eagerly caught, and drank the contents.

She took a large cluster of grapes, on which the purple bloom appeared. She divided it with the conte, and again returned to the sofa.

“Oh,

“ Oh, may I not then behold those lovely features?” did he passionately exclaim, as, advancing towards her, he threw himself at her side? “ Am I to be consumed with this secret desire? May I not gaze on that angelic countenance?”

“ Conte, I will no longer check your ardent wish : you are bound to secrecy—you have sworn that you love me—that heart, which palpitates within your bosom, beats but for me—this breast is its eternal prison. Yes, you shall behold those features you have subdued—those lips on which you have ratified your oath, and where you shall yet seal it a thousand times.”

She gradually raised the veil. The conte's soul spoke in his eyes : he beheld a lovely countenance ; but it was not the boarder's—the supposed Maddalena Rosa ! He examined the features ; but what was his astonishment, his horror, at tracing, notwithstanding the disguise

guise in which her present dress enveloped her, the well-remembered traits of the abbess of the convent—the sanctified madre Vittoria Bracciano, superior of the immaculate sisterhood of Santa Maria.—“Merciful Heaven!” was the exclamation that burst involuntarily from his lips.

The madre caught his hand, and exclaimed — “What mean you, conte? Why this astonishment? Why that exclamation of surprise?”

“Are my senses deceived?” continued the conte, without noticing her question. His eye, at that moment, fixed on the face of the Madona, in the enchanting picture of Raphael. He thought her features were the exact counterpart of the beautiful boarder. Her eyes, from which crystal tears distilled, seemed bent on his countenance, with a look of mingled reproach and pity.—“Ah, purest excellence, how have my bewildered thoughts injured thy

thy spotless virtue! How could I be deceived, lovely——”

He was going to utter Maddalena Rosa's name; but the madre interrupting him, exclaimed, with vehemence—  
“Where is this pure, this lovely excellence? Traitor! am I then deceived? Have you vowed eternal love, supposing me to be another?”

The conte, roused by the question, withdrew his eyes, which had till then been rivetted on the picture, and fixed them on the madre's countenance; but how changed were her looks! a thousand contending passions now marked her features. A malignant fire darted from those eyes which beamed before the languid rays of love; a deadly hue o'erspread those cheeks, which were before suffused with the warm glow of passion; and those lips were now pale and quivering, which had resembled the blooming moss-rose. The conte, confused,



fused, was unable to answer her interrogatory. This silence seeming to give a tacit confirmation to what she had uttered, heightened her rage to madness, and she thus continued:—"But this rival, this loved, this adored excellence, shall not escape my vigilance. No, no, deceitful, vile, dissembling man, I will discover her: no scheme, no plan, shall be left untried. I have friends—I have dependants, who exist but on my bounty. To them will I unburthen my complaints, and on their honest zeal place my dependence of revenge. But mark me, conte, should that resource fail, I am a woman of courage—one that will not suffer such an injury with impunity, but will myself seek revenge; and, should circumstances require, this hand can deal the blow of death."

The conte had at first determined on expressing openly the abhorrence he had conceived of her character; but this terrible threat awakened all his fears for the  
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the real object of his passion ; and he resolved (though he held deception in the most despicable light) to have recourse to it on the present occasion, urged by the voice of prudence, and in justice to the innocent, who might be involved in his confession. With great presence of mind, he caught the madre's hand.—“ And is it then possible !” exclaimed the conte. “ Can the lovely object before me suspect my passion ? What could lead me to take an oath so sacred ? what brought me to this convent ? and why should I betray such transports in your presence ?”

The madre's features relaxed—“ Then, why was that expression uttered ?—to whom addressed ?—and whence proceeded that mute astonishment, when I unveiled my features ?”

“ Charming woman !” cried the conte, “ I will satisfy these doubts, which indeed argue so strongly against me. While those bright eyes, while that enchanting countenance

countenance was veiled, hurried on by the excess of my tender passion, I forgot your holy character; but, at the fatal moment which discovered your features, I remembered the madre of this sacred mansion. My eyes caught those of the Madona, in that sublime performance of Raphael: methought she darted at me a look of anger, that petrified me; *that* it was which caused the sudden exclamation. I stood confessed of my fault; the crime rested solely in my breast. 'Twas I that so assiduously sought you; 'twas I that filled your breast with an irreligious fire. Oh, madre! I blush at myself; let me fly you; let my future penitence absolve the load of guilt that weighs upon my conscience."

"Noble youth!" exclaimed the madre, "how have I then wronged your love! But forgive me, conte; and let the violence of my anger, at supposing you false, prove the sincerity, the strength of my attachment. You are—you shall  
be

be mine: 'tis true, the whining priest can never join us; but that will render our loves even more permanent. Love must be free as the rose-kissing zephyr, unshackled by any tie but that which flows voluntarily from its own bosom. The strongest chain cannot withhold him; he will escape alike the gloomy dungeon or the lofty turret. 'Tis the silken cord that alone secures his flight; 'tis the tender wreath with which he has entwined our hearts, that ensures a bliss unclouded. What! though my parents procured me this exalted station, I cannot thank their care; they consulted but their own ambition, and not my happiness. Did they not rear me from my tenderest infancy? and could they not perceive that I possessed those glowing passions inherent in the human mind? Could they blindly imagine, that I should in an instant smother them? Are those warm emotions of the soul to be chilled by the damp gloom of a cloister?

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ter? Oh, never! confinement may, for a time, conceal the flame, which, notwithstanding, works in secret, to blaze more unquenchable. This life of celibacy was a human ordinance; pure nature shuddered at the dreadful act. It was a law, instituted perhaps by some great, some wretched man, who, satiated with the improper enjoyment of his vicious desires, retired, gloomy and discontented, to plan the wretchedness of thousands. But these human laws shall not influence *me*; my soul abhors this cheat, reared and concealed beneath the mask of piety."

The conte stood astonished at hearing such bold assertions proceed from the madre's lips.

"Nay, conte," continued she, perceiving his surprise, "this is perhaps the first time such language ever struck your ear from the inhabitant of a convent."

vent. But think not, because the tongue is silent, the mind is tranquil also. Others, in private, to themselves confess, that which to you I have thus boldly dared to utter."

The conte acknowledged to himself the justness of her remarks, though he wished they had not issued from the mouth of a female.—“Tell me, lovely madre——”

He was going to proceed, but she suddenly checked him.—“Address me not, I pray you, by that detested name. Title me Vittoria—call me what I am—your *love*. I cannot hear the hated name with pleasure, even from your lips.”

“Oh, tell me, Vittoria,” answered the conte, “should my visit here be discovered——You have confided in the padre Ubaldo; you have also entrusted the secret to that nun who conducted me from the gallery. May there not be danger?”



“Fear them not, dear conte,” returned the madre; “they are as strongly secured to me by interest, as you by love. They will not speak; and if they did, who would dare believe them? Have I not power to punish? and are they not my inferiors? Taint not your mind with idle fears, dear conte; we are secure, and will be happy. For the present, however, we must part: the dawn approaches; I will myself conduct you hence.

She caught his hand—she pressed it: her head inclined towards him. The conte could not but impress the parting kiss. They rose, and proceeded to the cloisters. Again he received the madre’s warm embrace, and quitted her, having first promised to return, according to her desire, on the Thursday following.

The conte proceeded mechanically to  
his

his palace. He entered his chamber, and, throwing himself upon his couch, gave way to those reflections which the late scene inspired.—“ Good Heavens !” thought he, “ how could I be so blinded by passion, as for one moment to suppose, that the lovely innocent boarder would follow such a line of conduct ? or, had it been really Maddalena, how could I yield my soul to any sensation but disgust ? What have I done in my delirium ? Vowed eternal love to an object I can never esteem—been guilty of a detestable artifice, which I must in all probability continue to practise ! Oh, how can I ever again think of the chaste, the adorable Rosa ? for that, I am convinced, must be the name of the enchanting boarder of Santa Maria ; ’tis she alone that can answer to the signor Patelli’s glowing description. Yet, if I had confessed my love for another, what might not have been the consequence ? The innocent Maddalena, who,

perhaps, does not even now remember me, would have fallen a sacrifice to the madre's implacable and cruel revenge; for, violent must be the passions which inhabit her bosom. What should I not have to dread from the monk Ubaldo! Yes, yes, she has friends, she has dependants, who would, doubtless, rouse themselves to action at her call. I shudder at the bare idea of that which might have happened. What a mind must this monk possess? What deceit must inhabit the bosom of him, who while employed in fulfilling the most contemptuous office, could, in my presence, kneel before the image of the Virgin, and offer up his hypocritical prayers!"

The conte revolved in his mind every circumstance that had occurred, from his first interview with the monk, to the conclusion of that with the madre Vittoria. The sun beamed above the horizon,

rizon, ere sleep threw over his senses her oblivious veil, and calmed, for a time, this tumultuous train of ideas.

## CHAP. VI.

————— 'Tis but to die !

'Tis but to do, what, at this very moment,  
In many nations of the peopled earth,  
A thousand and a thousand shall do with me :  
'Tis but to close my eyes, and shut out daylight,  
To view no more the wicked ways of men,  
And be a weeping witness of their woes.

Rowe.

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“ Thy fire alone, religion, death disarms,  
Breaks all his darts, and ev'ry viper charms :  
Softened by thee, the grisly form appears,  
No more the horrid object of our fears.  
We, undismay'd, this awful power obey,  
That guides us thro' the safe, tho' gloomy way,  
Which leads to life, and to that blest abode,  
Where ravish'd minds enjoy, what here they own'd—  
a God.”

MADDALENA'S mind was still occupied  
by the remembrance of the conte ; her  
bosom became the seat of passion ; for  
love

love triumphant held dominion over her heart. Marietta was her sole confidant ; her breast was the repository of Maddalena's most secret thoughts. The garden, the bower, and the chamber, formerly witnesses of their conversations, proceeding only from the pleasure which the contemplation of all-lovely nature, and the sweet voice of friendship afforded, were now alternately filled with the soft strains of love. Marietta, in pity to her friend, no longer attempted to check her fond hopes.

Thus glided their hours in happiness ; but short were their duration : a sudden melancholy took possession of Marietta's mind ; the colour faded from her cheeks, and her eyes lost their lustre and serenity. A slow fever preyed on her constitution ; her strength soon yielded to the ravages of sickness, and she seemed hastening to her native heaven. Unable to quit her cell, she was soon confined



to that bed, from which she was never again to rise. Maddalena was her constant attendant; and by every inducement that the tenderest and most sincere friendship could suggest, endeavoured to soothe and animate her drooping spirits. With anxious solicitude, she watched Marietta's broken slumbers, and administered those draughts which were ordered by the padre Ignazio of the convent of Santa Croce. Love no longer animated Maddalena's heart; for she beheld her gentle friend wasting beneath the morbid hand of pale disease; and, ere three days had elapsed, she was become a skeleton. Early on the evening of the fourth, she fell into a profound sleep. Maddalena, with her friend's hand locked within hers, knelt by her side in fervent prayer. She slept for some hours, and, on awaking, cast her hollow eyes on Maddalena's, from which the tears distilled in abundance. She pressed her hand to her  
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ashy lips, and kissing it with all the fervour that her languid state would admit —“ ’Tis done, my Maddalena. I wake to this world for the last time; my next sleep will be eternal. But tell me, are we alone, my friend?”

The nuns who had alternately attended Marietta, were then at vespers.

“ ’Tis well. Now, listen to me, Maddalena, and hear the latest counsel that ever will escape thy Marietta’s lips. With sisterly fondness we have cherished each other; our affections have been pure as the loves of angels; even so shall they prove lasting. We were both young, and alike inexperienced in the ways of the world: you have still your race to run, Maddalena. You must enter that treacherous garden, strewn with roses—those flowery paths, beneath whose fragrant sweets lie beds of thorns. You must mingle with the

sycophantic throng, with the base deceitful sons of men : but my journey, Madalena, is short ; I shall escape those dangers which threaten you. Death snatches me—the yawning grave gapes wide to receive me. Gladly I quit this scene of misery. I thank my Maker, who takes me from temptation. But, oh, my friend, strengthen your mind against those very trials, for many are the worldly difficulties you will have to encounter ! Bear courageously every ill that may befall you ; let no temptation draw you from the rugged path of virtue. Place no dependance on mortal aid ; there is but one in whom all power is vested—the God of Nature, the Lord Omnipotent, around whose throne no courtly throng is ranged to bar the humble suppliant's petition. He needs no studied oration, no pompous prayer ; he requires the genuine language of the heart—a contrite sigh—a soul-emitting tear—a gentle hand for charity, that  
greatest

greatest attribute, that makes man kindred with his God, that raises him above the brute, that tells him he has a soul. I know not how it is, my Maddalena; and yet, I think, the object on whom thy soul doats is worthy of thy affection. Yes, there is a sympathy in virtuous minds, that irresistibly inclines them to each other."

After a short pause, Marietta continued—"Should those difficulties assail thee, which my mind forebodes, resist them with steady fortitude. Shouldst thou for a moment waver, that weakness which is inherent in the human mind, will then predominate, and thou art irrevocably lost. It is by regulating each action of my life, according to the dictates of virtue, that I feel no horror at the near approach of death. My soul pants for eternity; eagerly it seeks to quit this outward frame, and fly into the bosom of its God, where it can be susceptible

ceptible of no pain, can feel no sorrow, nor be subject to any contending passions. Oh, my Maddalena! such, I am convinced, will be thy last moments. Dry those tears, my friend, which flow in such abundance; we part but for a time: be then thyself, nor let thy sighs embitter my dying moments."

Maddalena's heart o'erflowed. She fixed her streaming eyes on heaven, in speechless agony.—"And must we then part?" was all she uttered.

With angelic pity, she bent them on Marietta's wasted countenance. She caught her hand, and, sinking on her knees, covered it with her lovely cheek, rendered more beautiful by the tears that moistened it.

"Oh, curb this excess of grief!" continued Marietta; "and yet for a little hear me."

Maddalena

Maddalena rose, and again seated herself by the bed-side.

“ Here is a small crucifix of gold, which I have ever worn within my bosom ; it was the gift of my mother when I entered this convent : keep it, Maddalena, in remembrance of me.”

Marietta loosened the ribband whereby it was suspended to her neck, and kissing, presented it to Maddalena.

“ And at the silent hour of midnight, when thou art wont to chant thy hymn of praise, look upon it ; for, if departed spirits ever visit those they loved on earth, I will, at that solemn hour, be with thee ; or, if thou shouldst experience any untoward calamity, fix thine eyes upon this cross ; think on the indignities, the excruciating pangs, which were patiently borne by Christ, the divine original, and learn to bear thy  
own



own sorrows with calm resignation. Remember too, it was thy friend, the dying Marietta, who thus counselled thee."

As she concluded these words, the door of the cell opened, and the padre Ignazio entered, accompanied by two of the nuns. He approached the bed, and taking Marietta's hand, observed her for some time in silence.—"Sister," he at length exclaimed, "I cannot give you comfort; all hope is fled; therefore, prepare for what must shortly happen. No human skill, no drug is potent enough to counteract the fell disease that inwardly consumes you."

"Father, I am resigned," returned Marietta; "yet I would my confessor were here."

"Ere an hour hath elapsed, he shall attend you; for so he promised me."

The padre shortly after quitted Marietta's cell: the two nuns knelt on either side

side the bed, and told their beads. Madalena's face was covered with her hands, to conceal the tears which plenteously flowed.

As the abbey-clock struck nine, the padre Ubaldo entered, bearing the Host. He approached the bed: Marietta was with difficulty raised. The padre then ordered every one from the cell. Madalena quitted it with reluctance.

When half-an-hour had elapsed, the nuns were again admitted, one of whom was immediately dispatched to summon the lady abbess. She soon after appeared, followed by most of the sisterhood. She seated herself by Marietta's bed, and ordered every one present to kneel. The monk then delivered a short oration, at the conclusion of which the bell sounded. Every face was covered: the padre approached the bed, and administered the sacrament to Marietta.

Not-

Notwithstanding the fervency with which Maddalena prayed, she could not behold the scene before her, without recurring to her extraordinary dream.—“Good Heaven!” thought she, my friend appeared such as I now behold her, pale and emaciated: that dreadful part of the mysterious vision is too truly verified.” The threatening look of the abbess then came to her recollection, and the padre’s dreadful countenance, who, she fancied, on the present occasion, regarded her with scrutinizing attention, awakened in her mind all the sensations of terror she had felt on that occasion.

The madre Bracciano rose, and, bestowing a benediction on the dying Marietta, quitted the cell. Every one followed, except Maddalena and the two nuns. Shortly after, she received a message from the lady abbess, which summoned her to the refectory. She approached the bed, and, taking Marietta’s  
hand,

hand, pressed it to her lips in an agony of sorrow. She attempted to speak, but could not; she fixed her eyes, dimmed with tears, on those of her friend; then audibly sobbed. Marietta faintly pressed her hand, and, fixing her regard for a moment on Maddalena, raised her eyes to heaven; her lips moved, as if uttering a prayer; now her hand became cold and clammy; her fingers were agitated; her eyelids fell; she sighed, and dropped lifeless on the pillow. Maddalena cast a look of anguish on the pale corse of her friend, and, turning from the sight, raised her hand to her forehead, and quitted the cell. She proceeded slowly to the refectory, where she was severely reprimanded by sister Beatrice, for not having quitted Marietta's cell with the rest of the boarders. Her mind was so oppressed with sorrow, that she paid no attention to these illiberal invectives. Shortly after, the sisterhood retired to rest.

When

When in her chamber, Maddalena indulged the poignancy of her grief. How often, during the night, which was passed without once closing her eyes, did she wish to visit the remains of her friend ! how did she envy those sisters who were deputed to watch beside Marietta's breathless corse ! She rose early the following morning, and proceeded with trembling steps towards Marietta's cell. She gained the door, and, listening, found all within was silent.—“ Ah !” thought Maddalena, “ how the scene is changed ! Often, at this hour, has the well-known door been open to admit me, and the spread arms of my friend been ready to clasp me to her beloved bosom. How still, how dreary now is every surrounding object !” She tapped gently, and was admitted.

“ You must not continue long in this chamber,” said the nun who opened the door : “ it was the express command of the superior, that no one should enter here ;

here; but, knowing your attachment to our deceased sister, we have infringed her commands."

Maddalena returned her warmest thanks for this considerate mark of her affection. She approached the bed on which the body of Marietta was laid. Having been dressed during the night in the habit of the order, according to the rule of the convent, her arms were crossed upon her breast, on which was laid a large wooden crucifix; the veil was thrown back, and her feet were bare. Maddalena fixed her eyes upon the lifeless countenance of her friend, but never did death appear so amiable. A sweet serenity marked every feature; her skin partook not of the sallow hue, but was transparently clear; her lips were pale, but the blood had revisited her cheeks, and spread a faint rosy tinge that rendered her delicately beautiful. Maddalena's tears fell plenteously, as she pressed Marietta's damp icy lips.—"Alas!" cried



cried she, “ is this all that remains of my beloved friend?—this frame, which, like a beauteous marble sepulchre, covers the meagre form of death? Oh, thou ghastly monarch! couldst thou not spare this lovely innocent?—would nothing but this fair frame satiate thy cruel appetite? Thou hast cropped a budding lily!—hungry, thou pressest it to thy bosom, ere the world hath smelt its odoriferous sweets!—now I have lost thee, in what tender bosom shall I incline my drooping head?—what pitying heart will sympathize in my grief?—none. I must drink these tears, waft my sighs upon the bosom of the air, and feast upon my own sorrows. And wilt thou not smile then, Marietta?—are those sweet features for ever fixed immutable? Yes, yes; it must be so, for Maddalena’s prayer avails not. Oh, thou aerial spirit, if yet thou hoverest round thine earthly mansion—if thou art not so totally transformed, that every emotion of the human

man

man mind is fled, hear her for whom thou didst once feel a pure friendship, such as mortals think must glow within the breasts of angels! Remember the promise uttered with thy latest breath; remember the solemn hour of midnight, when I shall fix my tearful eyes on the sacred token which thou gavest me. Be with me in the day of trial—strengthen my mind in adversity, and guard me from impending dangers.”

Again Maddalena kissed her lips, and, with a composure which seemed newly to animate her breast, quitted this scene of death—this cell, which contained one, who had in life been her friend, and was in death most dear to her.

During the day the nuns were occupied in preparing the various ornaments which were to decorate the parlour behind the grate, it being customary that a deceased nun should lay there exposed  
for

for a certain time: all light was shut out from the apartment, the sides of which were covered with black cloth. In the middle stood the coffin, on a bier hung with black: the lid open, discovered the departed nun, completely habited, with her face bare. At the head of the coffin was a tall crucifix, and on the right side was placed an image of the patroness. Funeral torches of green wax, in black candlesticks, were ranged on either side, and two large censers burning incense perfumed the chamber.

Maddalena quitted this scene of preparation, that gave her infinite pain. She wished to enjoy solitude; she wandered to those spots which reminded her of her lost friend. The day wore tediously away: immediately after supper she retired from the refectory to her chamber. She drew from her bosom the golden cross; she kissed it; she conversed

versed with it, as if Marietta had been present. She continued thus pleasingly deluding herself, and at length sunk to rest; nor did she wake, till the clarion note of the bird of morn proclaimed the approach of rosy Aurora. Maddalena arose, and descended, with the rest of the boarders and sisterhood, into the grated chamber, where mass was performed. As soon as they had retired, the curtain was withdrawn from before the grate, and the body exposed to those persons whose curiosity might lead them to the church to behold the sight. The corse lay in state during this and the succeeding day, the third morning being appointed for its interment. The madre and all the sisterhood attended to hear mass; a requiem was sung, during which the sisters, by turns, approached the coffin, and strewed flowers round the bier: the body was then borne away to the vault, followed by the nuns, completely covered

with their veils, singing a solemn dirge. As the coffin was consigned to earth, Maddalena with difficulty stifled her emotions. The moment that the ceremony was ended she hastened to her chamber, and throwing herself on her knees, exclaimed in agony—"Oh Heavens! must I then never more behold my loved Marietta?"

Her feelings overpowered her, and she sunk on the floor. In this situation she remained, till one of the boarders, who came to summon her to breakfast, raised her, and by applying water to her temples, at length restored her to animation. She descended with her to the refectory; but was languid and stupified during the rest of the day. Night came; the sisterhood retired to rest. Maddalena's weary eyes yielded to the potent power of sleep: the convent was hushed; when suddenly a violent knocking was heard at the front gate, that made every chamber

her re-echo. The affrighted sisters arose, and flew towards the madre Bracciano's apartment, who, also alarmed at this uncommon disturbance, was dressed, and in the corridor adjoining. Soon after the portress appeared, who informed the abbess, that a female was just arrived, who desired to speak with her in private: she was ordered into the madre's room, who, after a short conference, came out, and desired that a chamber might be instantly prepared for the stranger. Every one instantly retired to their respective cells, greatly surprised at the singularity of this visit, and forming conjectures as to who the intruder might be.



## CHAP. VII.

*Th' Avvocato* had long suppress'd  
Enflamed rage in glowing breast ;  
Which now began to rage and burn as  
Implacably as flame in furnace.  
He trembled and look'd pale with ire,  
Like ashes first, then red as fire.  
At this the *youth* grew high in wrath,  
And lifting hands and eyes up both,  
Three times he *smote on stomach* stout.

BUTLER.

THE conte rose at a late hour, and immediately proceeded to the hotel of his friend Viviani, whom he found at home, and in a most pitiable condition. He was wrapped in a long dressing-gown, and reclining in a large elbow-chair, with his face completely muffled.

On the conte's entrance into the apartment, the signor was unable to turn ;  
but,

but, in a voice that indicated bodily pain, desired he would be seated. Astonished at beholding him in this situation, the conte immediately inquired the cause.

“ My dear friend,” cried Viviani, “ I have been most cursedly duped. As to your rencontre with the ruffians, it was a mere bagatelle, compared with the pains I have endured since last we parted.”

“ I beseech you, Viviani, explain yourself,” returned the conte.

“ Trust me, Marcello, I mean so to do,” returned the invalid; “ but hear the relation with temper, I beseech you; for my bones have sufficiently suffered, without my being subject to your ridicule.”

“ I dined yesterday with some gay young friends: we rose early, most of them having engagements for the evening. I determined on a walk towards

the banks of the Arno, whither I was accompanied by two of the party. We found a number of the middling class of persons; but among them two of the most beautiful creatures I ever beheld. We followed them for a considerable time, and, at length, accosted them. They remained silent; and my two companions, wearied with the fruitless attempt of drawing them into conversation, entreated that I would accompany them back to the city; but I yielded not to their request, (curse on my obstinacy!) and they shortly after quitted me.

“ I continued with my two syrens; and, after saying a thousand ridiculous things, at length succeeded in rallying them into good humour.

“ We prolonged the walk till dusk: I was enchanted with their persons, and no less so with the acuteness of their wit. During the conversation, I learnt that they were sisters; but all my endeavours

deavours to draw from them a confession of the place of their residence proved ineffectual. They at last informed me, that it was absolutely necessary they should return; and I accompanied them back to Florence.

“ On our entrance into the city, they entreated that I would quit them; but, being unwilling to comply with this request, I informed them, that they were certainly in possession of a talisman, that rivetted me to their enchanting society; and that I could not quit them, till I became acquainted with the place of their residence.

“ On this point they would by no means satisfy me; till, finding that I obstinately persisted in my resolution, they began to hesitate: this I thought a favourable omen, and again more urgently pressed their compliance. They, at length, requested that I would suffer them to converse for a few minutes in private: bowing, I permitted them to

proceed along the Strada. They soon turned, and beckoned me towards them. After acquainting me with their fears, their father's impetuosity of temper, and the strict character and religious principles of their mother, they told me, in seeming agitation, that they resided in the Strada di San Marino. I instantly urged a meeting; and they consented, with well-feigned reluctance, to admit me that night at ten o'clock. I requested to be made acquainted with their name: they informed me it was Fetti; that their father was an avvocato, and well known in the neighbourhood. I was then instructed to knock gently twice at the door; but that in case their father should admit me, I was to inquire for donna Teresa Fetti.

‘ I shall be instantly summoned,’ continued the artful little devil, ‘ and will clear every thing: he will retire with my mother, at an early hour, to rest, and  
you

you will then be left alone with me and my sister.'

"Transported with their unexpected compliance, I kissed their hands, and quitted them, exulting in my good fortune. Anxiously I waited the appointed moment. I flew to the Strada di San Marino, and soon found the avvocato's house. I tapped twice at the door, according to my instructions; it was soon opened by a very tall, bony gentleman, in a long rusty black robe. He fixed his eyes on me, and, in a voice equally prepossessing with his person, demanded my business. I, bowing, informed him, that I wished to see donna Teresa Fetti.

'Donna Teresa!' exclaimed he. 'What! my daughter? And pray what may your business be with her?'

'I called here, signor, by her own appointment.'

"After a moment's pause, the avvocato desired that I would enter. He



closed the door, which he locked after him, and conducting me through a long passage, I was ushered into a small apartment, well stocked with musty deeds and ponderous folios. He then desired I would be seated. The lamp, which was burning on the chimney-piece, gave but a dim light. The avvocato trimmed it, and taking his seat opposite to me, rivetted his eyes on my countenance, for some time, without uttering a syllable.

“ I confess this reception tended to damp my ardour; and I would rather have been enclosed in a cemetery, than in this cursed avvocato’s mansion.

“ After having sufficiently scrutinized me, he opened a desk, and taking from thence a large bell, began to sound it with violence. I, shortly after, heard the approach of footsteps; this, I concluded, must be donna Teresa. The door opened; when, to my astonishment, I beheld a diminutive thin old  
woman,

woman, who, with a shrill voice, inquired the commands of her *caro sposo*.

‘Look at this signor,’ said the avvocato; ‘do you remember to have ever before seen his person?’

“The old lady, with great composure, drew from her pocket a large pair of spectacles. Having placed them on her little thin pug nose, she leisurely approached me, and stretched out her scraggy neck, till her face nearly met mine, when my nose was assailed with the most nauseous fume, that issued from a mouth adorned with two rotten rows of ebony.

“After having kept me in torture for the space of five minutes, she turned from me, and, beckoning her husband, they both went out of the room. What passed between them I know not; but I shortly after heard him exclaim—  
‘Well, well, no matter; send her down; if the jade has been faulty, I  
I 6 shall

shall ascertain the fact; if not, why, leave the affair to me.'

"The avvocato again entered the apartment, and resumed his seat. I, shortly after, heard a person descending the stairs, who presently tapped at the door.—'You may enter, Teresa,' cried the avvocato.

"I thought, at length, that I should be relieved from purgatory. The door opened, and the damsel entered.

"I stared at her person in amazement; for instead of the lovely creature I expected to behold, she was, on the contrary, every thing that can be conceived of ugliness. She appeared to be about five and thirty: her figure was tall: but she was her mother's own child for leanness. Her eye, for she had but one, was small, and void of lustre. Her skin, which resembled tanned leather, or the autumnal leaf, hung about her face, as if warped from her large sharp bones; and the tresses  
which

which played around her swarthy neck, were straight, and of the raven dye—in short, she was a child worthy of her lovely parents.

‘What is your will, father?’ cried she, opening a large mouth, that emitted a sound loud and dissonant.

‘Be seated, my child,’ cried the avvocato.

“I now plainly perceived that I had been duped. I would have spoke; but he insisted on my remaining silent, and I was obliged to submit. In an authoritative tone, he thus began—‘Donna Teresa Fetti, I charge you to answer briefly the interrogatories I shall now put to you. Do you know this signor—or did you ever appoint a meeting with him at my house?’

‘What! I? Holy Virgin forbid!’ cried she, affecting to blush.

‘And did you never before see him?’ continued the avvocato. She replied in the negative.

‘And

‘ And to this you solemnly vouch?’

‘ I do, most solemnly,’ cried the ugly witch, rolling her eye with fury.

“ Her father then turning, inquired my name and place of abode? To this interrogatory I did not think fit to reply, and began to expostulate, but in vain. I at length gave myself the appellation of Tomaso Orazzi, and told him that I resided in the Strada Nova.

‘ And when and where did you see donna Teresa Fetti?’

‘ This is the first time, signor, that I ever beheld your daughter, if that lady answers to the name of Fetti.’

‘ How did you, then, learn the place of her residence—and for what purpose came you here?’

“ I then briefly acquainted the avvocato with my rencontre on the banks of the Arno, with the appointment of the two damsels to meet me at *his* house, and their having told me that their name was Fetti.

“ The

“ The signor, then, turning to his desk, began to write, and afterwards gave into my hands the paper, which contained a most sacred asseveration on my part, that I had never seen his daughter, and that my visit to his mansion originated in what I had heard from two infamous women, for such he termed the ladies whom I had met. To this paper he desired I would affix my name. I, without hesitation, signed myself Tomazo Orazzi.—‘ Go, my child, continued he, ‘ and quiet your fond mother’s fears; you are as innocent and spotless as ever.’ Teresa rose and instantly left the chamber. I could not refrain my laughter, at the conclusion of the avvocato’s sentence. He frowned, and desired to know if I had not sufficiently insulted him, and why I should still turn him into ridicule. The manner in which he asked this question added to my risibility. The avvocato, enraged, began to harangue me, using the  
most



most opprobrious language; he cursed those wretches, into whose vile company I had thrust myself; then, striking the floor vehemently with his foot, exclaimed—‘ But you shall presently rue this conduct;’ and, in a second, a tall fellow entered the apartment.

‘ Brother,’ cried the avvocato, ‘ you have doubtless heard the story.’

‘ I have learnt it,’ returned the other, ‘ from donna Teresa.’

‘ And you have, I suppose, considered the affront.’

‘ I have,’ said the signor, his brother, ‘ and the insult cannot be forgiven.’

“ The avvocato then continued, in the same furious strain—‘ Signor, you are young, and will doubtless soon forget the lesson I not long since gave you. But should your memory ever serve, it will only be to turn me again into ridicule. To obviate this, I have determined to fix my counsels irrevocably in  
your

your remembrance. Brother, you know my meaning.'

'I do,' returned the other, who immediately rose from his seat, and secured my arms. I struggled, but he overpowered and pinioned me. In the mean time, the avvocato had summoned his daughter, who entered the chamber, bearing a thin cane; he approached, and gave me several stripes on the back.

"He was interrupted by his lovely Teresa, who begged me to describe the persons and dress of the females whom I had met. Having satisfied her in that point, she soon recollected the real name of the sisters, and reminded her father, that they had formerly been her most intimate friends; but, perceiving the levity of their characters, she had broken off all connection with them. She then exclaimed, that this was a wicked plan to rob her of her spotless reputation, and pretended to be touched, even to tears. The avvocato's face kindled with  
rage,

rage, and he raved against the vileness of the act. His daughter left the chamber, while I attempted to extenuate my conduct.

‘ We have heard enough,’ cried the lawyer, who a second time applied the bastinado with his utmost strength. I begged, I swore, but to no effect; he ceased not till he reduced me to the situation in which you now behold me. I was then hurried into the passage; the door was unbolted by the avvocato’s brother; I boiled with rage: it stood half open; I turned unexpectedly, and, aiming a violent blow at the avvocato, laid him at full length. The signor, his brother, was behind the door, to which I immediately applied my back, and, placing my feet against the opposite wall, I pressed him with all the strength I was able. He bellowed in a convulsed tone, and I was fearful lest he should be stifled. The moment I quitted my position, he fell, groaning, along the passage.

sage. The avvocato had recovered from his prostrate situation; but, by the application of another blow, I a second time felled him, and instantly quitted his mansion.

“ I soon experienced the effect of the stripes I had received, and, with difficulty, gained my hotel; nor do I believe there is one inch of me but bears some mark of the cursed avvocato’s resentment.”

The conte, smiling, rallied him upon this ludicrous adventure.—“ I have often been astonished,” said he, “ at your singular good fortune. No man has been engaged in more affairs of gallantry than yourself, yet none ever escaped so well. This, however, may perhaps serve to deter you for the future.”

“ There, conte, you are mistaken,” returned Viviani: “ it has but heightened my propensity for intrigue. I will yet be revenged on the avvocato and his brother;

brother; nor shall the sisters reap any advantage from their deceptious conduct. But tell me, conte, how goes on your inamorata? have you already made a confession of your love? and does she return your ardent passion?"

"Indeed, Viviani, I have not since beheld her—nay, be not surprised, for when I acquaint you with the place of her residence, you will no longer be astonished at my apparent neglect."

The conte; knowing that the solemn oath which he had taken did not in the least appertain to Maddalena Rosa, was at liberty to divulge every thing which related to his passion. He therefore made Viviani acquainted with his having first beheld the boarder on the feast of the Annunciation. He also repeated his conversation with the signor Patelli, and his being introduced, through his means, to the duca Bertocci. In short, he omitted not a single circumstance which  
he

he had heard, relating to the object of his adoration. Viviani then assured him, that he was convinced the boarder must be Maddalena Rosa—"For I was once in her company ; she answers the most finished description of beauty you can give, and her mind is indeed the seat of every virtue. But you shall this day dine with me, conte ; and, if my aching limbs permit, I will accompany you in the evening to vespers at Santa Maria, and you shall then be fully satisfied as to the name of your mistress."

The conte joyfully accepted the invitation. In the evening, Viviani dressed himself with difficulty, and they proceeded together to the grand church of the convent. The conte was unwilling to place himself directly opposite to the grate, as the madre, in that case, would not fail to observe him ; he therefore took his station behind a pillar of the opposite aisle of the church. At the  
commence-



commencement of vespers, the conte anxiously requested his friend to point out the duca's daughter; when Viviani soon convinced him, that the object of his love was, indeed, no other than Madalena Rosa, daughter of the duca Bertocci. They remained in their situation unobserved; Viviani repeatedly urged his friend to approach the grate, but the conte constantly objected.

At the conclusion of the service, they returned together to the hotel; and the conte, at a late hour in the evening, quitted his friend Viviani, and returned to the palace of Marcello Porta.

## CHAP. VIII.

We'll mock the time with fairest show :  
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know.  
 SHAKSPEARE.

.....

Sink me to death, plunge me in streaming fire,  
 Heap mountains on my head, and bury my disgrace :  
 I to this earth will grow,  
 Out-rave the winter sea, out-rage the northern wind,  
 And with my loud complaints alarm the gods,  
 Till they resent *my* wrongs. TATE.

THE appointed evening was arrived, and the unwilling conte prepared to fulfil his engagement with the madre Vittoria. He proceeded, as usual, to the cloisters, but no padre Ubaldo this night made his appearance. The same nun that had conducted him from the gallery, on his last visit, was now anxiously waiting his arrival. Having led him to the same

same sumptuous apartment, she again quitted him, and the madre soon after entered by the same shifting panel. A glow of pleasure was depicted on every feature; her dark expressive eyes irradiated the love that animated her soul. She flew towards him, and fondly seizing his hand, pressed it to her bosom. — “ Ah ! how lingering have the moments passed since last we parted ! but the source of joy, of life, returns ! he flies to my longing arms, borne on Love’s downy pinions ! ”

Thus situated, the conte could not but embrace her.

“ Oh ! ” continued the madre, “ what ecstasy this, to press the bosom we adore, and feel its glowing palpitation ! Such pleasures repay an age of living suspense. Yes, life is precious, since it affords such heavenly sensations. But tell me, conte, have you by day watched  
the

the sun's bright course? have you, like me, chided the immortal charioteer, that he lashed not his fiery steeds more swiftly to their immortal bed? have you by night sat sighing to the pallid moon, and, as the fleeting clouds by chance obscured her faint lustre, blushing, pronounced your mistress's name? Oh! tell me—for this and much more have I endured for you."

"Yes," exclaimed the conte, "I have breathed forth her name; and, Heaven witness, how true, how ardent, is my passion!"

"Noble conte, I glory in avowing that you alone possess my unrivalled affection; but why seem you thoughtful? oh! let me share your grief, if any doth oppress you; for who should partake your sorrows, save her that holds dominion in your heart?"

The conte's asseveration had brought *her*, to whom it was really addressed, so

strongly to his imagination, that he found it impossible any longer to carry on the deception. He flew to the table, and hastily seizing a goblet, filled it to the brim, and, raising it to his lips, exclaimed—" 'Twas bringing to my recollection the tedious hours that have elapsed since last I saw my love ; but I will rally my spirits, and drown the sluggish thought. Here's to her my soul adores !"

He quaffed the rich liquor, and, replenishing the goblet, presented it to the madre. She received it from his hands, and repeating the words, "*To him my soul adores !*" drank sparingly of its contents. He again took back the cup, which he emptied without hesitation. The wine soon operated on his senses ; he unconsciously threw himself on the couch, where the madre was already seated ; her ivory arm immediately encircled his neck ; the conte's  
head

head sunk, unresisting, on her snowy and palpitating bosom. The drugged wine, which he had imprudently drank, had it been taken in moderation, might have served to exhilarate his spirits; but he had outstepped the bounds of prudence, and youthful passion gained the better of his reason. What can be said? the madre was beautiful, and the conte but a man.

The abbey-clock struck four, as Marcello Porta awoke from a deep sleep, into which he had fallen.

“We must part,” cried the madre, as she impressed a kiss upon his lips.

The conte, stupified, arose from the couch. He gazed around the chamber, on which the wasted lights beamed dimly. He turned his head, and beheld the abbess at his side; still he thought that all was but a dream; he could not



credit his bewildered senses, and stood speechless and astonished.

The madre approached him, bearing a light.—“Come, come, my love, arouse yourself, for soon will the morning dawn.”

She took his hand—he made not the smallest resistance, and she led him in silence from the apartment.

As they entered the corridor, the damp air struck chillingly through his veins, and at that moment he became sensible that all was indeed a reality. They gained the long avenue, when the madre stopped, and directing the conte to continue to the end, and then cross the uninhabited apartments, she desired him to enter the ancient gallery, where padre Ubaldo, she said, was in waiting to conduct him from the convent.

Having

Having lavished the most affectionate caresses on a being who now loathed himself, and was insensible to her passion, she presented the taper to the conte, who received it without uttering a syllable.

The abbess left him, and after a few minutes' pause, the conte proceeded to the end of the passage. He traversed one of the apartments; but, on entering the second, the strong current of wind extinguished the light, and left him in utter darkness. He held the madre in too much detestation to return again to that chamber, where he had spent the night; nay, he had predetermined in his own mind never more to enter it. He therefore resolved to find out the door, if possible; but should his endeavours prove unsuccessful, he doubted not but padre Ubaldo would come to seek, and safely conduct him from the monastery.

He crossed to the opposite side of the apartment, and, with some difficulty, found a door; he forced it open, and proceeded onwards; but it did not communicate with any other chamber, as he found himself in a damp, narrow passage. The conte determined to continue; "for, at least," thought he, "I can but return. He slowly moved forwards for a considerable time, when he gained a stone staircase, which he descended; but was soon arrested in his course by a large iron grate. The conte, after some labour, unfastened the bolt—it creaked on its rusty hinges. He entered a stone hall, which appeared to be of large dimension: this he traversed, and, on the opposite side, found a door. As he opened it, a voice struck his ear; he listened attentively, and heard the most melodious sounds. After some minutes, he determined to proceed. Now the strain died away, and all remained drear and silent.—" Whence  
could

could issue those notes," exclaimed the conte, "at this early hour?"

He continued onwards for some time, unconscious whither his steps would lead him. Again the same heavenly harmony floated on the air; it appeared at no great distance: he proceeded with caution towards that side of the chamber; now he distinguished words. His eye caught a crevice in the wainscot near the floor, which emitted a faint gleam of light; he approached, and found it to be a moving panel, which communicated with another chamber: still the same voice continued; he listened attentively, and distinctly heard the stanza of a solemn hymn, chanted with pathetic sweetness. He cautiously shifted the panel, and found a black cloth suspended, which nearly reached the ground. He stooped to raise it, when it suddenly gave way and fell. The conte was fearful, lest that incident

should alarm the person within; nevertheless, to his infinite surprise, the voice still went on, without the least interruption. He then found himself in a large apartment, the wainscot of which was covered with black hangings. From the centre of the cieling was suspended a lamp, that diffused a dim light, discovering to the astonished conte a female on her knees, from whose lips the harmonious strains he had heard still continued to flow. He could not at that distance discern her countenance; his mind became inspired with a secret awe—the gloomy scene before him, contrasted with the luxurious apartment he had so lately quitted, struck him forcibly, with a painful sense of his past folly. As he continued to gaze on the mournful object before him, he felt a secret inspiration, and, yielding to the divine glow of religion, remained rivetted to the spot. The female at length arose, and slowly paced to and fro the chamber,

ber, waving her hand, as in the act of strewing flowers. As she passed beneath the lamp, its faint gleam struck upon her face.—“ Good heavens !” exclaimed the conte, “ I cannot be mistaken !”

He advanced a few paces—it was no delusion—the female was indeed Maddalena Rosa. She was habited in a loose flowing garment; her glossy hair partially concealed beneath a white silk net; on her right arm was suspended by a ribband a small gold cross, which she frequently pressed to her roseate lips. The conte continued to advance; he minutely observed her features, but his astonishment is not to be conceived, when she appeared unconscious of his presence, being wholly occupied in her own meditations. Maddalena paused; when the conte, advancing still nearer, perceived that she was in a profound sleep. Ah ! how he wished he could, without

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alarming her, behold those beauteous eyes unclosed! Still she continued to wave her delicate hand : the conte could no longer refrain—he gently seized and pressed it to his lips. She started from his touch, and, uttering a faint scream, fell senseless into his arms. He gazed on her with the tenderest solicitude. Some minutes elapsed ere she recovered ; her soft expressive eyes opening, met those of the conte, whose looks betrayed the anxious emotion of his breast : blushing, with her hand she hid her face. The conte, dropping on his knee, exclaimed—“ Oh, pardon me, thou sainted excellence ! see at thy feet the presumptuous man that dares adore thee ! yes, angelic Maddalena, view the wretched mortal, whose happiness vanished on beholding thee, whose breast has never since resumed its wonted calmness. Oh ! let thine eye be tempered with a gentle ray of pity ! doom me not at one glance to eternal misery ! This intrusion

sion

sion was not concerted—chance led me to the spot; yet can I not arraign the accident, that has thus afforded me the pleasing opportunity of confessing my pure and unalterable love.”

Maddalena, confused, withdrew her hand, which the conte had pressed between his.—“I beseech you, signor, rise from this suppliant posture, and instantly leave me.”

“Never,” cried the conte, “till I obtain your forgiveness, for thus undesignedly breaking upon your meditation. Benignity marks that countenance divine—Charity, that godlike attribute, which immortalizes weak man, sits enthroned within that breast. Pity holds her crystal seat within that heavenly eye—she bids thee melt—she wills thee to forgive my fault, and alleviate my misery.”

“If your intrusion, signor, was unintentional, why should you entreat my pardon? but, to convince me it was

really so, I request that you will instantly retire."

"Oh, stern and cruel Virtue, how my soul adores thee for the very pangs thou dost inflict! Yes, Maddalena, I will instantly obey you; for I, alas! have no claim on your affection. The presumption rather merits your resentment. Farewell! To your keeping I entrust my heart, my life——"

The conte was proceeding towards the door by which he had entered; he heard a noise—he stopped—but all was silent. Turning towards Maddalena, he beheld her pale and trembling; he could not withstand the sight, but flew to her relief.—"Be not alarmed," said he, "'twas nought but the wind, that howled along the gallery, or closed some distant door. Oh! calm your perturbed feelings, lovely Maddalena."

"It was the sound of footsteps, signor. Gracious Heaven! should I be discovered

discovered at this unseasonable hour, and in your company, what have I not to dread from the madre Vittoria's vengeance ! what from——”

“ The madre !” interrupted the conte.

Her name had brought the late shameful scene full to his recollection : the colour forsook his cheek, he bent his eyes to the ground, as unworthy to gaze on the chaste object before him.

“ Yet,” continued he, after a pause, “ answer me one question. Has the madre more power over you than on any boarder in the convent ?”

“ What mean you, signor, by this interrogatory ?” returned Maddalena.

“ Does the duca Bertocci destine you to embrace a monastic life ?”

“ Signor, my father's intentions respecting myself I am totally unacquainted with ; but, whatsoever they be,

be, his daughter, I trust, will never scruple to obey them."

At that moment the abbey-clock tolled five. Again the sound of footsteps was heard; a faint light gleaming at a distance seemed to discover, through the doorway, the ghastly features of the padre Ubaldo. Maddalena was petrified with fear, and the conte's soul agitated with a thousand contending emotions—he stood mute and motionless. The light glided away, the countenance disappeared, and all was hushed.

Maddalena soon regained her fortitude, and was quitting the chamber, when the entrance of the madre Vittoria, followed by the monk Ubaldo, arrested her course! The conte retired a few paces, and Maddalena was rivetted to the spot!

The abbess slowly advanced, with  
haughty

haughty and measured step. She alternately gazed on them, while a dreadful expression of disappointment, malignity, and revenge, marked every feature.—“Who are you, signor?” said she, in an imperious tone; “and how have you gained admittance here? Know you the sacred spot on which your unhalloved feet have dared to tread?”

The conte, at this interrogatory, eyed her with a look of contempt, and then bent his regard to the ground.

“Tell me,” continued the madre, in a commanding voice, “how did you enter?” She paused awhile. “Signor, you shall repent and tremble for this contemptuous silence. Know, that I am the lady abbess of the convent of Santa Maria, the superior of this holy mansion, which you have dared to profane; and learn, too, that your kind portress shall not escape my insulted dignity.



dignity. You, Maddalena Rosa—you, who have infringed every law of this spot, devoted only to purity—you, guilty wretch, shall feel the punishment due to your heinous crime.”

“ ’Tis too much,” cried the conte : “ dare you to brand this pure innocent with the name of guilt?—she, who is spotless as the saint to whom your convent is devoted? I gained admittance here myself—I had no assistant.”

“ Hold, signor !” cried the madre, exultingly—“ swear to me by the Most High, that no one was concerned with you, and I will instantly pardon the offence.”

The conte was confounded ; his dreadful oath compelled his silence, though he beheld the very persons who had involved him in this dilemma.

“ How, signor !” continued the madre, with a sneer, “ are you then mute?  
have

have you not one word to say in your behalf?"

"Yes, I could recount a volume," exclaimed the conte, with vehemence; when, lowering his voice, and fixing his penetrating eyes on the madre, he continued—"but that this place is ill calculated for the recital. Know, that I, the conte Marcello Porta, urged on by love, have been guilty of duplicity, which my soul shudders to avow. I have been compelled to prostitute my noblest feelings to the gratification of a vicious appetite, and to blind a furious woman."

The madre stifled her feelings beneath a feigned smile of contempt.

"Signor, prudence should have taught you to be silent. You may retire to your chamber, donna Maddalena—do you, padre Ubaldo, conduct her thither." She bowed her head to the madre, and

as

as she quitted the chamber, cast a look of inexpressible tenderness and anxiety towards the conte, which did not escape the enraged madre.

The conte's eyes were fixed upon her, till she disappeared; when the abbess approached, and seized his arm, exclaiming—"Vile hypocrite! let her form still dance before your love-sick fancy—learn from me, that Maddalena Rosa is lost to you for ever."

"You will excuse me, madre, if I doubt you in this particular. I shall make known my passion for Maddalena to the duca Bertocci. I am her equal, and if she reject me not, spite of your machinations, she shall be mine."

"Vain man, how I pity thy imbecility! how I despise myself for having ever stooped to debase my affections, by placing them on a being so contemptible! but every tender sentiment now is fled—you have wounded my pride—you have stung me to the quick, and shall  
feel

feel the power of my vengeance. Every scheme that hell can suggest to an injured and despised woman, shall be put in practice to destroy you; and, know, I have *you* in my power, and *her*, whose existence you prize beyond your own. Should even my plots fail to separate you and your detested love, I will cite you before the Holy Inquisition, that terrible tribunal! I will myself appear against you, and tax you with sacrilegiously entering the convent, with intent to carry off one of its inhabitants. I will name your Maddalena as an accomplice; nor shall your profanation be forgot, in daring to style her as immaculate as the sainted patroness of this community. I will behold your tortures—I will enjoy them—for well I know you dare not violate your sacred oath. For the present, I shall mock you with a show of liberty, like some poor harmless bird, whose prison-door is open wide, but cannot 'scape, his wings being  
being

being clipped. Now, signor, I leave you to your meditations. The padre Ubaldo approaches—he will conduct you hence.”

“Yet, hear me for a moment,” cried the conte.

The madre paused.

“Oh! let your vengeance fall on me; but spare, oh, spare the guiltless Madalena!”

The madre, with an ironical sneer, turned to the monk, who had by this time entered.—“You will conduct the signor hence.”

The conte would have resumed his petition, but the madre quitted the chamber without paying him the least attention. The padre then informed him that he waited his pleasure. The conte followed in silence, and was soon conducted without the convent walls. With a heavy heart he proceeded to the  
palace

palace of Marcello Porta, and throwing himself on a couch, yielded to the agonizing feelings that agitated his troubled mind.



## CHAP. IX.

—— Oh, drive me from that traitor, Man !  
So I might 'scape that monster, let me dwell  
In lions' haunts, or in some tiger's den !  
Place me on some steep, craggy, ruin'd rock,  
That bellies out, just dropping in the ocean :  
Bury me in the hollow of its womb,  
Where, starving on my cold and flinty bed,  
I may, from far, with giddy apprehension,  
See infinite fathoms down the rumbling deep :  
Yet not e'en there, in that vast whirl of death,  
Can there be found so terrible a ruin,  
As Man, false Man ! smiling, destructive Man !

LEE.

MADDALENA's heavy sleep was not disturbed by the bustle which the female's arrival had occasioned in the convent, and she woke not the following morning till after her usual hour. She descended to prayers, where the madre was not present ; and at their conclusion went  
with

with one of the boarders into the garden, from whom she learnt the disturbance which had happened the preceding night, and of the stranger's arrival. The bell soon summoned them to the refectory, and the lady abbess shortly appeared, followed by a beautiful young woman, whom she introduced to the sisterhood, as a female who sought in that convent a temporary asylum from the persecutions of the world. She was of the middle stature, her complexion inclining to the brunette. Her eyes were large and expressive; her dark brown hair flowed in natural ringlets, and partially obscured her well-turned neck. Her deportment was easy and graceful; there was, besides, a melancholy cast in her features, that rendered her appearance peculiarly interesting.

The first moment she beheld her, Maddalena felt a strong prepossession in  
her

her favour. She sighed, and the big tear stole down her cheek, as she recollected her deceased friend, Marietta. Perhaps, thought she, the all-bounteous Creator has sent a pitying soul, that will patiently lend an ear to my sorrows, and sympathize with me.

The madre approached the table, where the boarders were ranged in their places, and desired Giacinta (for such was the stranger's name) to be seated; and the abbess soon after quitted the refectory. The stranger had, from her entrance, excited the gaze of the sisterhood, and every eye was turned towards her. Maddalena sat nearly opposite the place which she had taken. Giacinta soon caught her gaze, and was also struck with her appearance. At the conclusion of the repast, as Maddalena quitted the refectory, the stranger passed her, and bent on her a look of inexpressible tenderness. Maddalena

dadena proceeded to the garden, whither she was followed by the new comer, who soon after accosted her, and they entered into conversation. There was a plaintive melody in her voice, that charmed the hearer, and, added to the interesting expression of her features, insured Maddalena's regard, who, during the discourse, ventured to inquire if she meant to take up her abode in the convent for any length of time.

Giacinta, with a sigh, replied, while a tear started from her eye, that her residence there depended on circumstances; but that, in all probability, it would be her fate to make that monastery her residence for ever.

Maddalena gazed on her with a look of tender solicitude—"Ah," thought she, "my mind whispers that thou art unfortunate; alas! what pity it is that a flower so fair and tender should droop

its head beneath the untoward blast of affliction !”

“ Signora,” cried Giacinta, pressing Maddalena’s hand, “ you seem to possess a heart that will sympathize in another’s woes ! yes, if I augur true, I have found one soul that will patiently hear the voice of sorrow. My griefs indeed are many ; nay, they are sufficient to overwhelm a frame so weak as mine.” She paused ; and her overcharged bosom unburthened its affliction in a flood of tears. Maddalena mingled the dew of pity with hers.—“ Yes,” continued Giacinta, “ those gentle drops proclaim the tenderness of your heart. I will confide to you my sorrowful tale : my weary head shall seek repose on your kind breast.”

“ Oh that my feeble efforts may lull your cares to rest, and for ever steep them in oblivion ! Yes, Giacinta, my ear is open to receive thy sorrowing relation—my heart is ready to pity it ;  
and,

and, to my utmost, I will joyfully endeavour to mitigate thy sufferings.”

“Then meet me, my friend,” hastily replied Giacinta, “for by that tender appellation I shall henceforth call you, at this spot attend me, ere we retire to rest. I cannot myself bear to relate my own misfortunes—in your hands I will entrust the manuscript which contains the sad recital.”

Maddalena promised to be punctual; and they shortly after separated, with mutual professions of friendship: Maddalena retired to her chamber, where she continued during the day. The gaudy sun now sunk behind the distant hills—the grey mist of evening threw a gloomy tint on the surrounding scenery, and silence proclaimed the approach of night. She descended to the garden, where she found Giacinta waiting her arrival.—“This is most kind,” said she; “this is the first proof of friend-



ship, for your punctuality shows that I have, in some measure, occupied your thoughts during the short term of our absence. Here, Maddalena, are the sheets which contain the relation, and have been oftentimes blotted with my tears; take them, my friend, and peruse their sad contents; they will instruct you how I have suffered, and with what resignation I have supported my sorrows: when you have read them, you will find me, I trust, not unworthy of the regard you have bestowed upon me; and, should you also have felt the nipping blast of misfortune, they will teach you to bear your ills with calmness and resignation."

At the conclusion of these words, Giacinta hastily retired, and Maddalena returned to her chamber. She seated herself, and placing the manuscript on the table, exclaimed—"How unaccountable are the ways of Providence! how bountiful is the all-powerful God to us  
his

his frail creatures ! 'Twas but yesterday that the remains of a loved friend were consigned to their mother earth, and this day's sun has lighted me to a second object, whose appearance vouches for the purity of her heart, who places her sole confidence in me, and whose sorrows I am bound to soothe. Yes, thou art beneficent, Almighty Creator ! thy power is supreme—thy works are incomprehensible ! thou comfortest those who seek the shadow of thy mercy—thou art father to the friendless—the orphan's tears, the widow's sighs, the captive's moan, and the guilty man's repentant prayer, all ascend to thy mercy-seat ! Yes, Marietta, thy counsels were just." Maddalena drew from her bosom the golden cross—" Oh ! may I have found a second female, who imitates thy angelic virtues ! may she possess thy piety, fortitude, and charity ! may her counsels be just as thine were, and may thy Maddalena comfort her

afflicted spirit ! Yes, thou art now, perhaps, with me ; perchance thy winged spirit hath left its blissful mansion, and now hovers round thy Maddalena. Hark, that sound, perchance, is not the nightly breeze, but the sighs of my Marietta ! and yet the pale orb of night now throws her silvery gleam upon my chamber, and I see thee not. Why remain'st thou invisible ? Must I then never more behold thy form ?”

Maddalena continued this melancholy strain, till all was hushed within the convent. She forgot Giacinta's manuscript, and, at a late hour, without undressing, threw herself on the couch. The downy balm of sleep soon stole upon her senses, and in her dreams, she still thought of Marietta. Delusive fancy painted to her wandering imagination the form of her friend, still exposed in the grated chamber, as on the preceding day. She thought the sister-  
hood

hood strewed flowers over the pale corse — unconsciously she arose, and descended to the very apartment where she had been discovered by the conte.

The padre Ubaldo, in compliance with the command of the lady abbess, conducted Maddalena in silence to her chamber. As she entered, the ray of light from the lamp which she bore, reflected full upon the monk's countenance, and she observed that his scowling eyes were bent full upon her. He closed the door without uttering a word, and retired. She instantly fell on her knees, and recommending herself to the protection of the Almighty, continued in earnest prayer, till the entrance of sister Beatrice, who came to summon her into the madre's presence.

The blushing east proclaimed the sun's approach, as she quitted her chamber ; Maddalena followed the nun, who si-

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lently led her into the chamber of the lady abbess, who was there to receive her. She, for some time, eyed Maddalena malignantly, whilst every moment heightened the rage that already marked her countenance. The madre, in a peremptory tone, at length addressed her as follows:—" You cannot be unacquainted, Maddalena Rosa, with the reasons that have induced me to summon you into my presence. Tell me, how could you thus presumptuously dare to infringe the rules of this mansion, sacred to chastity? Where did you first behold the conte Marcello Porta, whose sacrilegious person has profaned the convent? and how did he obtain admission?"

She was silent. Maddalena then related her having first seen him in the church, on the Feast of the Annunciation. She described, in lively colours, the strict friendship that had subsisted between herself and Marietta; her emotions

tions at that nun's funeral, which, she afterwards found, had so totally occupied her senses in the night, as, during her sleep, to lead her to the grated chamber, where she was awakened by the conte Marcello Porta, if such was the signor's name—and solemnly protested her total ignorance, as to every circumstance of his gaining admittance. The abbess smiled disdainfully, and turning to sister Beatrice, who was seated and writing beside her, exclaimed—"Have you noted this most romantic story?"

The nun answered in the affirmative; when the madre again addressed herself to Maddalena—"And have you then such daring effrontery? or are you so hardened as thus to attempt to cover your wickedness with a detested falsehood? Do you imagine that I possess an understanding so weak, as to give credence to this tale, devoid of every thing like truth or probability. It is an insult, young woman, I can scarcely



brook. If you had really been sleeping, you would have quitted the chamber with precipitation, as soon as the conte had awakened you. But this was not the case; you could remain there, and hold forbidden converse with him; and you could hear his professions of love. Oh, this is a most plausible tale! you were conveniently habited for the occasion! Shame! shame! that these holy walls should harbour a creature so lost to virtue! Confess your crime—fall on your knees—and beg forgiveness of offended Heaven; you may then, perhaps, experience my lenity.”

Maddalena, in a solemn voice, replied —“ I have no sin of that nature to confess—I am guiltless of the charge alleged against me. Before the throne of the Almighty, I offer up my cause; for He whose judgment is unerring, will doubtless vindicate my injured innocence.”

The concluding words were uttered  
with

with peculiar emphasis; the madre could not resist their force, but remained pensive for some minutes. At length, suddenly arising, she exclaimed—"I have heard enough; reconduct her, Beatrice, to her apartment; nor, at your peril, suffer any one to approach her."

The madre was quitting the chamber.—"Hold, madam," cried Maddalena, with dignity; "why should I thus be debarred society?—why is the daughter of the duca Bertocci to be thus indignantly treated?"

"When a daughter of the duca," retorted the abbess, "degrades herself by adopting such mean deceptive conduct, she merits the most rigorous chastisement."

"You are right, madam," continued Maddalena; "but till I am conscious of such deceptive conduct, I shall not patiently submit."

The madre was astonished at the spi-

rited resolution that marked her deportment. In a transport of rage, she quitted the apartment, a thousand horrid schemes of revenge boiling in her bosom. The malicious Beatrice instantly led the devoted Maddalena to her chamber. Having locked the door upon her, the madre's orders were issued throughout the convent, that no nun or boarder whatever should dare approach her apartment, on pain of the severest punishment; but the abbess thought it necessary to conceal her motives for these harsh measures.

Left to her own reflections, Maddalena gave vent to the tears she had so long restrained. Though her mind dictated how much appearances were against her, yet she could not but think the whole was a premeditated plot against her, in which the lady abbess was principally concerned. As she recollected the conte, this idea vanished;  
his

his manner was sincere—yes, she was convinced he really adored her. How then could he submit to be the agent of so much baseness? Yet his appearance in the convent greatly astonished her.—“It was not,” said she to herself, “in the hope of seeing me, that he gained admittance here; for his intrusion, he had asserted, was positively unintentional? What, then, could be the motive of his visit? Why was the padre Ubaldo absent from the monastery of Santa Croce at that unusual hour?” She revolved in her mind every occurrence, the result of which was nothing but doubt and perplexity.

On quitting Maddalena, the madre had retired to her own apartment, where she found the monk Ubaldo in waiting. Having related the conference that had so recently taken place, she required his assistance in the plans of revenge requisite to be adopted. The padre approved

ved of the abbess's interrogatories, and of her carefully noting Maddalena's answers; and after pacing the chamber for some time, with disturbed gesture, the monk reseated himself.—“An idea has struck me, how you may give vengeance its full scope. Maddalena must instantly depart this convent.”

“And what will that avail?” hastily returned the abbess; “she may then defy my power.”

“Hear me, madam,” cried the sullen friar; “Maddalena Rosa is daughter to a duca; she is, besides, a boarder here, and your authority over her is but limited. Had she, indeed, been a professed, you might have exercised your authority to its fullest extent, though she had derived her birth from the greatest monarch; but now we must proceed with caution. I will, this very morning, visit the duca Bertocci, and make him acquainted with our discovery. I will induce him to believe that  
you

you hold the act in such abhorrence, that it is absolutely necessary, for the honour of this sacred mansion, that his daughter should instantly quit the walls. I will then so far insinuate myself, that he shall require my counsel; and I, with seeming reluctance, will yield to his entreaty. The duca possesses a castle at some distance from Florence; thither will I advise him to send Maddalena Rosa, and there hold her in close confinement. Yes, madam," cried the monk, raising his eyes, which, till that moment, had been rivetted to the earth, "you shall then judge of my fidelity. Your injured feelings shall be satiated with vengeance; you may then, in secret, pursue your plans. I will be your agent: through me you may inflict on her the greatest curse—her father's hatred; for the duca is nice in honour, and a most severe judge, in every point that concerns the breach of female delicacy."

"Padre, your advice is just, and  
must



must be pursued; nor shall the zeal which you evince in this affair sleep in my remembrance."

The monk arose, and, bowing his head, departed for the palace of the duca Bertocci, musing, as he went, on the best method of imposing on his credulity, and infusing throughout the tale he contemplated the most evident signs of probability. Every man practising deceit, how plausible soever his tale may appear, always fears detection; nor was Ubaldo utterly free from this secret dread, the constant attendant on guilty actions.

On gaining the palace, he was conducted to an apartment, where he waited the duca's arrival. On his entrance, he observed the monk's countenance, and thought his features not unfamiliar to him; but the idea was transitory, and quickly vanished. When  
they

they were seated, the duca requested to know the business which had brought him to his palace.

The padre remained silent for some minutes; an air of well-feigned grief was depicted on his countenance, and his eyes were bent to the ground in seeming dejection.—“ Noble duca,” he at length exclaimed, “ I am deputed on a business most painful to myself, and heart-rending to your grace—an affair which concerns you in the nicest point.”

“ Concerns me !” interrupted the duca, hastily.

“ Yes, monsignor, it stains the honour of your family, disgraces the holy votaries of religion, and sacrilegiously offends the Deity—’tis from the madre Vittoria I come, and of your daughter Maddalena I am compelled to speak.”

“ Of my child ! proceed, good father, I beseech you.”

The

The monk then, with dissembled sorrow, related the suspicious interview between Maddalena and the conte, with every exaggeration that malice could dictate. At this dreadful recital, a chilling horror ran through the duca's veins—a livid paleness o'erspread his countenance—his lips quivered, and his whole frame was in violent agitation. He fixed his penetrating eyes on the visage of the monk—he liked not his sombre countenance. There appeared a something in the general character of his features that inspired mistrust.—“ Yet, why should he impose upon me ?” said the duca to himself; “ what interest can he have in vilifying Maddalena ?”

Conviction flashed upon his mind, which conveyed inexpressible anguish to his soul. He determined, notwithstanding, to appear doubtful of the truth, and thereby detect the falsehood, if any had been practised. Drawing  
his

his chair opposite the monk, and still continuing to fix his eyes upon him, he addressed him as follows :—“ When the reputation of a daughter is called in question, a parent cannot be too minute in his investigations. I pray you, father, acquaint me with the means by which my daughter obtained the keys of the convent of Santa Maria.”

The monk was not entirely prepared for this interrogatory ; but his fertile invention soon suggested a reply.

“ Monsignor, had I not been acquainted with that circumstance, I should not have presented myself before you. The portress was bribed by the lady Maddalena ; and this morning, when the madre and myself discovered the conte, she disappeared.”

The duca rose from his seat, and traversed the chamber with visible emotion.

“ By

“ By your interrogatory, monsignor, I perceive that my veracity is questioned—it was never before called to account. But I am a poor monk—my vows instruct me to bear insult patiently, and I must submit.”

The padre uttered these words with such seeming humility, that the duca relaxed in his suspicions. The monk, observing this change, well knew the conduct he should adopt, and artfully rising from his seat, bowed, and proceeded to quit the apartment.

“ Stay, father,” cried the duca, “ I have been over-hasty ; but excuse, I beseech you, a fond parent’s emotions.”

The monk resumed his seat, while the duca continued to pace the chamber, often pressing his hand to his forehead, and easing his o’ercharged bosom by uttering convulsed groans.

“ Monsignor,

“ Monsignor, we are all prone to error—regard, I pray you, this fault of the lady Maddalena with less passion; perchance the blame lies wholly with the conte.”

“ And what if it proves so?” exclaimed the duca; “ her conduct has, nevertheless, been culpable in the extreme. She was discovered in his company, at an improper hour; but she shall repent the shameful step. If she really loves the conte, why not rely on my affection? Have I been other than an indulgent father? Have I not told her that I would never check her affections, provided they were placed on a meritorious object? and to return my love with such base ingratitude, is not to be borne with any degree of patience. Did you not say further that she must leave the convent?”

“ Yes, monsignor, it is the madre’s particular desire.”

“ And shall be instantly complied with,”



with," continued the duca. "Yes, I will immediately convey her to some far-distant monastery, where the conte shall never trace her."

"Excuse me, monsignor," said the monk, "but youth is indefatigable in pursuit of the object it is desirous to attain. Marcello is a nobleman, and rich; were his researches to prove effectual, gold has powerful attractions; and by its means, he might perhaps counteract your prudent designs. Have you no servants in whom you can confide? no distant castello on any of your estates, where your daughter may safely remain concealed?"

The duca stood musing for some minutes, and at length exclaimed—"Yes, yes, it shall be so! I thank you, padre, for the counsel. This night she shall depart the convent of Santa Maria; therefore, if it so please you, return instantly to the lady abbess, and notify my intention. Bid her prepare every thing

thing for my daughter's speedy journey ; by twelve this night a carriage shall be in waiting to receive her at the convent gate."

The padre bowed his head in token of assent, and immediately quitted the palace.

On his departure, the duca yielded himself to those agonizing feelings, which every susceptible parent must experience on such an occasion.

" And have I then borne with resignation the loss of an adored wife?—Did I survive an only son, to whom I looked forward as the supporter of my dignities, and whose virtues I fondly imagined would add to the lustre of his noble progenitors?—Did I bear all this with fortitude, to find at length a daughter, who possessed my whole esteem, unworthy of my affections?"

These

These were the thoughts that tore the heart of the most amiable of men, through the malicious fabrications of the guilty abbess and her detestable abettor, the monk Ubaldo.

## CHAP. X.

“ I love thee with so strange a purity,  
That the bless’d gods, angry with my devotions,  
More bright in zeal than that I pay their altars,  
Will take thee from my sight.  
We’ve not an hour allow’d for taking leave ;  
Ev’n that’s bereft us too : our envious fates  
Justle betwixt, and part the dear adieus.”

THE reflections of Maddalena were interrupted by a gentle tap at the door. On her inquiring who was without, she was answered by the gentle Giacinta.

“ Alas, my friend,” cried Maddalena, “ I cannot admit you. I am a prisoner in my chamber, on a false accusation.”

Giacinta was astonished at this intelligence, being in her private cell at the time the madre’s command was issued.

Hearing the approach of footsteps, she hastened from the door; which was, shortly after, opened by sister Beatrice, who entered with some refreshment. Having placed it on the table, she retired, cautiously securing the door after her.

Maddalena passed the remaining part of the day in the most dreadful state of disquietude. Wearied at length by the conflicting emotions of her breast, she yielded to the potency of sleep, that kindly stole upon her perturbed senses.

As the clock struck one, she was awakened by a loud knocking at her door, accompanied by the voice of sister Beatrice, who bade her instantly arise, and prepare for a journey. The astonishment which this summons occasioned, prevented her from obeying, for some time, the hasty command; and it was not till Beatrice had a second time appeared,

peared, that she was ready to attend her. Maddalena tremblingly followed her steps to the outward parlour of the convent. She wished to have seen Giacinta, ere she departed, but knew that this was wholly impracticable. Beatrice, it is true, might have rendered her this service; but she disdained to solicit a favour from a person she had so little cause to esteem.

On entering the apartment, she beheld two strangers, who, she learned, were to attend her on the journey. A lay-sister then brought in a collation, of which Maddalena declined partaking, and addressing herself to the strangers, she requested to know by whose command she was compelled to quit the convent, and whither they intended to convey her. She received for answer, that it was her father's command; but the place of her destination they were not at liberty to disclose. Maddalena instantly



conjectured the cause of this journey, and conscious how vain it would be to dispute the duca's commands, she remained silent.

As her conductors were preparing to lead her to the carriage, the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Giacinta appeared. The chamber of this boarder being but at a small distance from Maddalena's, she had heard Beatrice's last summons, and instantly dressing herself, prepared to bid her adieu—"For perhaps," thought she, this may be the last time I shall behold her." On entering, Beatrice rose, and ordered her immediately to retire. Giacinta paid no attention to this haughty mandate: her arms were open, and Maddalena flew to receive her embrace.—"I shall now," said she, "quit these venerable walls in peace, since Heaven has blessed me with thy wished-for presence."

She paused, while dewy tears coursed  
down

down each lovely cheek.—“ Oh, tell me,” cried Giacinta, “ why are you thus torn from me? why am I denied the comfort of your sympathizing friendship? why am I bereaved of you, my only remaining consolation? how many days of tranquil happiness did I flatter myself we should enjoy together! yet I once more wake from these delusive dreams to wretchedness and grief. Yes, Giacinta is the child of endless sorrow!”

“ Judge not so rashly,” cried Maddalena: “ the Almighty is just; arraign not his infinite goodness—he has hidden joys for thee: cast thy cares on him, and happiness shall yet be thine.”

“ That is indeed my only comfort,” exclaimed Giacinta; “ there is a world to come, unchequered by misfortune, where I shall enjoy a bliss unclouded.”

Beatrice sullenly remarked, that time wore apace, and it was absolutely necessary that Maddalena should be gone. Giacinta, being as yet unacquainted with

this nun's character, viewed her with astonishment; while Maddalena, glancing towards her a look of contempt, replied—"It is not the first time, sister Beatrice, that I have experienced your kindness." Then turning to Giacinta, she continued—"But we must part, my friend; yet, ere I leave these walls for ever, one thing I have to tell thee. Whatever thou shalt hereafter learn respecting the cause of my departure, believe it not: I quit this venerable mansion, innocent of the base charges alleged against me; nor would I survive the indelible stain such a proceeding would have heaped upon my name."

"Fear not, Maddalena; I can credit no tale to thy detriment; and though calumny may, for a time, brand thy virtuous character with shame, yet, in the end, be sure it will burst forth with redoubled lustre, and blast the infamous defamer. Farewell then; take with thee thy Giacinta's unalterable regard."

The

The trembling drop of sorrow glittered on her polished cheek, as she pressed Maddalena to her throbbing bosom. Again they bade each other a tender adieu, when she was conducted to the carriage, which immediately drove off with the utmost velocity.

As she caught a last glimpse of the abode of her former happiness, the poignancy of her feelings quite overpowered her, and she gave way to a flood of tears. The vehicle continued to proceed at this swift pace during the remainder of the night, the horses being several times changed; and during this period a variety of painful ideas crowded on Maddalena's brain.

As the first grey tint of morning rose above the horizon, she experienced a sensation of mingled pleasure and melancholy. She saluted with a smile this forerunner of day. Now the faint

rosy tinge appears, which gradually increases, till the azure vault is laced with crimson streaks. These recede before the saffron carpet, that widely spreads itself throughout the east. A ray of gold next rears its glittering point. Swiftly it rises, diffusing a bright gleam of light. The resplendent sun now shows his front magnificent; the fiery globe immense rolls through the wide expanse, before whose radiance the dew that hangs at heaven's wide portal melts, diffusing sweets ambrosial.—Such was the glorious scene that wholly occupied Maddalena's attention. What ideas of Omniscient Greatness did they not inspire!—"Ah!" thought she, "if the Almighty suffers weak man to view such sights as these, what must the virtuous spirits enjoy under his immediate protection? They must reside in yon azure heaven, where golden groves, gently agitated by the perfumed air, strew pearls transparent on the aerial path

path they tread. They must bathe in crystal streams, more sweet than dew upon the bosom of the blushing rose—translucent streams, whose channels glitter with the diamond's blaze. They must repose on beds delicate as their celestial forms, on new-plucked leaves of lily and carnation, whose varied tints accord with their complexion."

Thus did Maddalena's warm imagination wander to scenes for ever veiled from mortal eyes. The carriage at length stopped, and one of her conductors rode up, and informed her that it was necessary she should take some refreshment, ere they proceeded on their route. She declined alighting, and one of the attendants entered the house before which they had stopped. When she inquired of his companion, who stood at the door of the carriage, concerning the duration of their journey, he informed her, that they must use dispatch, to attain the place of their destination before the close of day.

The



The domestic returned, when Maddalena having sparingly partaken of the offered refreshment, the door was closed, when her conductors instantly mounted, and recommenced their route.

Maddalena's thoughts now wandered to Marietta. She retraced every scene of joy they had experienced together.— She recurred to her dying words.— “Yes,” thought she, “thy foreboding was just: thy Maddalena must undergo many afflictions; yet will she remember thy counsels.” That moment, drawing the cross from her bosom, she kissed and bedewed it with her tears.

Now, the recollection of Giacinta crossed her mind: she was desirous to peruse the manuscript, but in her hurry, had inclosed it, with many other papers, in her portmanteau. The conte, next, occupied her fancy: again she pictured to herself his elegant person, as he appeared in the church of Santa Maria; again, she beheld him on his knees before her, pleading the ardency of his affection.

affection. She recalled his every word, his every look, and was surprised, as inwardly she turned her thoughts, to perceive that he had so much engrossed her attention, and blushed to feel how much she loved him. Now the vindictive abbess, and the treacherous monk Ubaldo, rose before her. See portrayed to her imagination the exaggerated tale of designing malice, which must have poisoned her father's mind against her.

Thus the day passed, till the sun was fast sinking into the bosom of the west. A warm tinge coloured the leafy trees, the birds no longer carolled forth their cheerful notes: they were retired to their moss-wove beds; for, with the sun they rose, and with it sunk to rest.—The carriage moved slowly onwards, and ascended a steep acclivity. On attaining its summit, the drivers halted to give their horses breath. Maddalena beheld from this eminence a gloomy scene before her.

The last rays of the setting sun gleamed  
ed

ed faintly on a most extensive forest, whither the winding road, by which they were to descend, seemed to lead. The rest was a barren waste, that extended as far as the eye could discern, and the distance was involved in the grey tint of evening. Maddalena distinguished what appeared to her the lofty turrets of a castello, that seemed to lord it over this dreary scene. The wind was bleak; Maddalena felt its influence, and drew up the window of the carriage, which again moved swiftly forward.

As they entered the tufted forest, all was darkness; for when the sun was in his noontide splendour, its radiant beams with difficulty pierced the thick branches which had fantastically woven themselves, and formed a roof almost impenetrable. They journeyed on for a considerable time, when Maddalena suddenly started, at hearing a clock, at no great distance, strike the hour. The knell was dismal; and between each stroke,

stroke, there was a solemn pause, that conveyed an inexpressible sensation to Maddalena's bosom.

The vehicle, shortly after, stopped before the gate of an antiquated castello, on which the moon, at that moment, threw her silvery beams. The surrounding moat was broad, and amply supplied with water, which reflected the black shade of the half-raised drawbridge. One of the domestics attempted to sound the bell, but rust had rendered it immoveable. Having no other means of making their arrival known to the inhabitants of this mansion, the two domestics, the drivers, and another servant, who had also followed the carriage on horseback, called lustily to the porter. The echo of their voices reverberated, and made the solemn stillness that succeeded truly awful. After a few seconds they were answered from within: the drawbridge was lowered, and the carriage moved slowly into the  
first

first court of the castello. Maddalena alighted, and was conducted by a young woman into an apartment where refreshments were already arranged, and every thing seemingly prepared for her arrival.

“ You were apprized, young woman, of my journey hither,” said Maddalena, addressing her.

“ Yes, my lady, a messenger from the duca arrived here some five hours since; he was so jaded with hard riding, that, having delivered our master’s orders, he begged that he might retire to rest; and though we pressed him to take some refreshment, he would not listen to our entreaties.”

“ Are there many domestics in the castello ?”

“ No, my lady, there is none, save my father and myself.”

Maddalena then motioned her to quit the chamber. When alone, she exclaimed—“ Here then I must remain a  
solitary

solitary outcast, debarred from all social intercourse, without one friend to enliven the dull monotony of the scene. If I wish to converse, to these antiquated portraits of my ancestors I must address myself, that grace, in all probability, every apartment of this gloomy abode. How culpable must my beloved parent deem his injured child, to doom her, unheard, to this dreary solitude! What pangs, too, must the idea of my guilt inflict on his susceptible heart! Has he not already experienced sufficient calamity, without receiving this last stab to his happiness, which may prove fatal to him as if I had really erred? Why did he not see me? I would have convinced him, and incontrovertibly proved my innocence. How artfully must the charge have been supported against me, or he would never have condemned me thus unpitied, for he loves his Maddalena with parental affection."

In



In this train of reflection did Maddalena continue, till the melancholy clock proclaimed the hour of midnight. She arose, and summoning the female attendant, desired to be conducted to her bedchamber. After traversing the adjoining hall, and several inner apartments, she at length entered that which was prepared for her, and found her trunks, and every thing as convenient as the place would admit. Maria, for that was the young woman's name, received Maddalena's thanks for her care; and having informed her that she had no further occasion for her services, bad her retire to rest. Having offered up a fervent prayer to the Almighty, she yielded her senses to sleep's all-potent charm.

END OF VOL. I.





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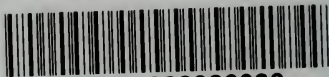
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